

# DUCK

IN A RAINCOAT

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THE JOE RICCI STORY

A TRUE CRIME EXPOSE

**WHAT 60 MINUTES, THE NEW YORK TIMES  
AND STATE OF MAINE DIDN'T TELL.**



MAURA CURLEY

# Duck in a Raincoat

The Joe Ricci Story

By Maura Curley

*What 60 Minutes,  
The New York Times, and the state of Maine didn't tell.*

## **Dedication**

*To Daniel, my fellow fury,  
and Benjamin, for leading me to the light.  
And to all of us whose lives have ever been darkened by a “duck in a  
raincoat.”*

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## Foreword

Joseph Ricci persuaded the news show *60 Minutes* to broadcast a flattering segment about his struggles, a jury in the state of Maine to award him \$15 million, and prominent parents, psychiatrists, and judges to send teens to his treatment center. He also asked voters of Maine to elect him their governor. Joe Ricci's story from poverty to wealth has been compared to Horatio Alger's. But too many believed what Ricci said was true and paid the price.

This story about Joe Ricci is the product of intense research. Former employees at his racetrack, residents at his Elan School for troubled adolescents, lovers, relatives, childhood friends, attorneys, a judge, psychiatrists, and his former business partner of twenty years, reveal the underpinnings of his personality. They serve to warn us about the dangers of Ricci's type of behavior.

This book was first published in the 1990s, before the Internet and Facebook. Since then Elan survivors, and legions affected by Joe Ricci, learned about it via social media and found strength in sharing their stories of horror and healing.

During the past two decades I have heard from people who told me this book changed their lives. They realized they were not crazy, but the victims of a system that failed them. Many former residents of Ricci's Elan School used this book to explain to their parents and relatives an experience they couldn't articulate.

Some survivors of the abuse at Elan slowly rebuilt their spirits, broken by the place they were sent to heal. Others were not so fortunate and suffered marginal lives loss. Too many chose suicide.

After nearly forty years of operation, Elan finally closed in 2011, thanks to a diligent band of former residents, intent on discrediting the facility via social media.

We have more knowledge about mental illness than we had when this book was first published. This makes it shocking to realize adolescents struggling with sanity were irreparably harmed by something that was packaged as being therapeutic. Sadly, other boot camps that pretend to help troubled teens still exist without proper medical knowledge or supervision.

This updated third edition focuses on practices in therapeutic communities such as Elan and explains how a certain personality type can appropriate virtue and manipulate people.

Over time we've stripped off the masks of sanity from many we believed were honorable men. Bernie Madoff, Donald Trump, and numerous others come to mind. But we learned too late. Similarly, Joe Ricci demonstrated how considerable wealth often commands our respect, which should never be given unless it is earned.

Maura Curley

# **PART I**

## Chapter One: Building an empire

“Why did you marry daddy?”

The question hung heavily in the air. Sherry Ricci felt for her five-year-old child of divorce, straddling his fantasies with adult realities. After one nervous breakdown and three years of therapy she had found the strength to end her ten-year marriage. But she was still confused. How had Joe Ricci, the man she worshiped, turned cruel?

She knew, despite her own inner conflict, her son deserved an answer. She told him: “Your father was like the Fonz. He breezed into town with his bell-bottom trousers. I thought he was cool.”

Her son, familiar with the TV show *Happy Days*, appeared thoughtful, imagining his mother with the Fonz. (A leather jacketed motorcycle riding 1950s hero on a popular TV show in the 1970s.) He finally spoke, exasperation in his voice. “But mom,” he cried. “Don’t you know the really cool one on the show is Richie Cunningham?” (the innocent teenager on the same show) Sherry realized she hadn’t. Perhaps that was her problem.

Sherry Benton was a twenty-two-year-old travel agent, the child of prosperous but alcoholic parents when Joe Ricci walked into her life on a blind date in 1968. She was attracted to the bad kid still undergoing drug rehabilitation at a residential facility called Daytop Village, less than an hour away from her hometown in Guilford, Connecticut. He dazzled her with his charm, and she fell in love. She felt sympathy for him too. He had a difficult childhood, growing up in Port Chester, New York, a factory town that borders the affluent town of Rye.

Ricci had been raised by his maternal grandparents, Michael and Angelina Santoro. The Santoro household also included Ricci’s aunt Josephine “chubby,” her husband Vinnie, and two uncles. He sometimes called his grandfather “daddy,” though his own father, Frank Ricci, “Bamboo,” lived in the next town. Bamboo, whose nickname described his uncanny ability to bounce back when thrown a punch, was a regular at local pubs. He and his friend Arnie Horton were known as the “kingpins of bar fights.” Sandy Fischer, who owned Sandy’s Old Homestead Bar and Restaurant, across the street from the Port Chester

police station, remembered Bamboo as a charmer.

The Santoros had contempt for Bamboo and his family. They were angry with their daughter Ann for getting involved with the Riccis, first generation Americans, who spoke Italian and broken English. The Santoros considered themselves better bred. They spoke Italian as well as perfect English. Angelina Santoro, also spoke Yiddish. Michael Santoro was a mason, who worked at the town incinerator. They were poor but proud.

Ricci was an altar boy at Holy Rosary Church and spent time at the Don Bosco Community Center, known as ‘The Dons,’ where he learned how to box and play basketball.

Vic Donato, four years younger than Ricci, remembered him from then.

“We called him Joe Rich. I’ve never seen anyone as wild. If you were nice to him, he’d be your friend, but you didn’t want to mess with him. He was always looking over his shoulder, and if you did something to cross him, he’d never let you forget it. Joe Rich was sharp, knew how to survive. I used to think he had nine lives. If he did something wrong, somebody else would take the heat. He always had himself covered. He was ahead of his time. When we were involved in basketball games, he was thinking about stealing cars. I figured he’d eventually be successful, either that or dead.”

Donato said Ricci dated his social science teacher in junior high, a tall dark-haired beauty just out of college. Often, he’d play hooky, and hang out with others, near the Santoro house on Fox Island Road. Sometimes, he and his friends would go to the depot at the corner of Irving and Pearl Streets and steal Mrs. Wagner’s pies from delivery trucks.

When Ricci was fifteen, he was in an auto accident, thrown from the car, and lay in a mud embankment before help arrived. He spent months in the hospital and later was transferred to Burke’s Rehabilitation Center in White Plains where he learned to walk again. Some relatives recall this accident as a negative turning point for his life.

“From there everything went downhill,” stated one family member, observing that it could have been the drugs he was given after the accident. “They pumped

a lot of stuff into him."

About a year later Ricci left Port Chester High, and was sent to Lincoln Hall, a residential treatment facility for boys known as PINS. (persons in need of supervision) a residential community forty miles north of New York City. After spending two years at Lincoln Hall Ricci returned to Port Chester High in 1963. He stayed there until he quit in 1966, just before his 21st birthday. Then he worked at the Arnold Bakery factory in downtown Port Chester and later for Modern Tobacco Company, also in Port Chester. After brief stints at these jobs he entered Daytop Village, a residential drug and alcohol program where he stayed for two years until he met his ticket to a new life, his future wife, Sherry.

Ricci reluctantly entered Daytop Village after he was caught robbing a mail truck. He was given the option of spending seven years in Danbury prison or entering the drug rehabilitation program at Daytop. Ricci's uncle, Joe Santoro, had some friends in government, and arranged his nephew's admission to Daytop in lieu of Danbury. Those who knew Joe Ricci at the time said he was never the heroin addict he claimed. His 'addiction' was just a ruse to keep him out of prison.

When Sherry met Ricci, she knew he had problems, yet he seemed sincere, and wanted to better himself. She was a stewardess, working at a travel agency while waiting to begin a training program for an overseas airline. Her roommate, a schoolteacher, was dating a Daytop staff member, and invited her friend and Ricci one night for dinner. They were snowed in by a blizzard. Sherry was smitten. Years later Sherry says it wouldn't surprise her if her future husband arranged the blizzard.

Joe Ricci was unlike other guys Sherry had dated. He seemed sensitive to her feelings when she told him about her alcoholic parents. She was attracted to his worldliness too since she had a very different childhood. She grew up with her four brothers and sisters in a historic cape in the tony town of Guilford, Connecticut. Her parents, who traced their heritage back to the Mayflower, owned a grocery store.

It was a case of opposites attracting. Even Sherry's blond blue-eyed looks were a sharp contrast to Ricci's dark hair and eyes. She had attended a year of college. He hadn't graduated from high school. She adored him, and so did her parents.

One day Ricci appeared at the travel agency in New Haven where Sherry worked, announcing that he'd run away from Daytop. He was upset because Daytop administrators told him he wasn't ready to graduate from the program. He told her Daytop was just using him for his fund-raising skills because he had been making speeches on behalf of the organization. Ricci moved into the rented beach house Sherry and her friend shared. When Sherry came home from work, she'd discover he had cleaned the house, and bought her little gifts. She fell in love and canceled her plans to move to New York for stewardess training. She and Joe Ricci became engaged.

What happened next could have been prophetic, a forecast of their bizarre life.

Ricci sued Sherry's insurance company for injuries he said he sustained during a minor traffic accident. Sherry had run a stoplight and hadn't thought he was even injured but her insurance company settled the claim. Ricci used the money to buy her engagement ring. They were married on December 13, 1969, in Guilford, Connecticut. Both were twenty-four years old.

Ricci needed a job, so he sought one in an institutional setting where he felt comfortable. He heard about a pilot program being launched at a state facility called DARTEC (Drug Addicts Rehabilitation Through Educational Community) in Meriden, Connecticut. It was one of the first programs of its kind to adopt a medical model of professionals working alongside former addicts to counsel patients. A psychiatrist named Donald Pet administered the program that combined professional counseling techniques with the recovered addict's experience.

Pet told me he hired Ricci because he had leadership skills and a lot of persuasive ability. He recalled, "Joe had a very unusual way of getting many of the street people to follow him. He got people to rally around him, kind of see things his way, and do his bidding."

A staff member at DARTEC introduced Ricci to his future business partner, a Massachusetts psychiatrist, twenty-five years older, named Gerald Davidson. After meeting Davidson, Ricci and his wife moved to Quincy, Massachusetts where Ricci worked at Survival Inc., a drug counseling center, as a para-professional services coordinator. A short time later, Survival Inc. purchased a two-story stucco house on a residential street where Joe and Sherry operated a group home for opiate addicted men. They also ran marriage-counseling sessions

for Davidson's drug addicted patients.

During this period there was a controversy at Survival Inc. which made it to the Boston newspapers. It involved three staff members Ricci had brought with him from DARTEC who were fired because of their personal drug use. In announcing their departure Ricci told the press: "Drug abuse is incompatible with Survival Inc. staff principles as well as with the abstinence principle of the therapeutic community."

Just a couple of months later Ricci and his wife decided to begin their own therapeutic community. The couple had been putting in long hours working for Survival Inc., but not making much money. They conferred with Dr Davidson and decided the three of them could run a for profit enterprise. State mental health statutes were too restrictive in New York, Connecticut, or Massachusetts, so they selected Maine because it did not have stringent licensing procedures. It was 1971, two years after Woodstock, and drug treatment centers were hot property. On May 30 they opened the center called Elan, at the site of a former summer camp in Naples Maine.

Davidson, then associate director of the drug clinic at Boston City Hospital, gave the program credibility by promoting the model of health care professional and former addict, pioneered by Dr. Pet. But it was agreed Davidson wouldn't work on site. He would remain at his home in Brookline, Massachusetts, and utilize his professional psychiatric contacts to help develop Elan.

Ricci and his wife, the sole supervisors of the program at the small camp, worked in exchange for free food, housing and a percentage of profits. Gerry Davidson, and another man, David Goldberg of Newton, Massachusetts, were the major partners until alleged embezzlement by Goldberg forced him out. Ricci subsequently sought a full partnership with Davidson, an arrangement that was secured by selling \$8,000 worth of stocks Sherry inherited from her grandmother.

The couple struggled during the early days of Elan, according to Sherry. They lived on the top floor of the rustic building in Naples with residents on the second floor. They seldom had any private time, never went out to eat or to the movies. Every activity centered around the therapeutic community and making money. Sherry said her husband would often lie awake in bed thinking aloud

about how they were going make their first \$100,000.

“Becoming rich was definitely an obsession that seemed to drive Joe;” recalled an early staff member at Elan: “Money was extremely important to him when he was earning \$10,000 a year and driving an old Oldsmobile. It represented the power to be somebody important, who would be accepted by everyone around him...”

Elan was not lucrative at the beginning. Most of the money made was put back into the business. But gradually it started reaping a big profit, attracting troubled teens from wealthy families, who were charged \$1,200 a month for treatment. The Naples facility relocated to the former Potter Academy, a landmark in the town of Sebago, and another secondary site was established in Waterford, Maine.

On January 8, 1974, a fire destroyed the former academy in Sebago that Elan rented from a local doctor. Ricci and Davidson were in Chicago recruiting residents when the fire erupted in the early hours of a frigid morning. Fire departments from the surrounding towns of Gorham, Standish, Steep Falls, Sebago Lake, and Baldwin responded. But their efforts were hampered by extreme cold, with temperatures around 12-degrees Fahrenheit.

The building’s owner, Dr. Barnes, told the press that he didn’t have much insurance to cover the building. But Elan was “adequately insured.” Ricci explained to the press that residents had done extensive remodeling to the building, making substantial improvements, and it was hard to see all their work destroyed. Sherry, who was pregnant with their first child Jason at the time of the fire, doesn’t recall how much they got for an insurance settlement. But she observed the blaze seemed to be a turning point for Elan. Afterwards, they moved operations to a permanent location in Poland Spring, Maine. Money started pouring in, and the staff grew. The cause of the fire was never determined.

The Riccis were millionaires before they turned thirty years old.

## **Chapter Two: "Dance with the one who brung ya."**

Ricci and his wife had been married five years and had an infant son, when they purchased an elegant estate owned by a former bank president. Their sprawling home on Blackstrap Road was surrounded by a hundred acres in Falmouth, Maine, a wealthy suburb of Portland.

Though it was located only a few hundred miles from the Santoro house on Fox Island Road in Port Chester, it was the opposite end of the earth for Ricci. He was on the other side of the therapeutic fence, treating rather than being treated. He had become the adult authority figure troubled adolescents looked to for support. He had achieved financial success beyond his dreams. Yet he wasn't happy.

Those close to him didn't know how he'd be from one moment to the next. Without warning his moods would change. Sherry feared Talwin, a prescription painkiller she saw him take frequently. When Ricci had been working at DARTEC some staff members said they were worried about all the pills he was consuming. Ricci exploded, angry that people had confronted him, especially in the presence of his wife. He insisted he had been taking Talwin for the pain in his elbow, caused by his teenage auto accident. He could not bend his whole arm, and sometimes, depending on the weather, the pain was unbearable. Dr. Davidson prescribed the pills. Sherry confronted Davidson about her husband's addiction, but the psychiatrist dismissed her fears, telling her not to worry.

In 1975 Ricci had a beautiful wife who loved him, two young sons, wealth, and adulation from Elan residents. That same year his fifty-four-year-old father was arrested and charged with attempted murder and possession of a dangerous firearm for shooting a friend at the Canary Bar in Port Chester. Bamboo, drinking late into the night, began arguing with a guy named Stanley Moore. After exchanging angry words, he left the bar, but returned minutes later brandishing a gun, making threats to Moore, calling him a "dirty nigger." When Bamboo's friend, Arnie Horton, tried to intervene, Bamboo shot Horton in the chest at close range. Then he went to the police station to turn himself in.

Richard Dooley, on duty in the early hours of that morning, took the rifle from Bamboo, and dispatched three Port Chester patrolmen to the bar where they

found Horton on the floor bleeding from the chest. He was taken to the hospital where he was listed in fair condition. Dooley says he thought Bamboo was going to shoot him too. “My first instinct was to get the gun,” recalled Dooley. “I knew Bamboo was capable of doing crazy things.” Arnie Horton eventually recovered. Bamboo served six months in the county jail for the shooting, but he and Arnie spent many more nights carousing together.

Ricci barely communicated with his father before he and Sherry married. Sherry said she helped forge a relationship after their sons were born because she thought their boys should know their grandparents. He had been reunited with his mother Ann in Port Chester, while he continued to live with the Santoros. Ann remarried and tried to regain custody, but Angelina had grown too fond of Joe to let him live with Ann and her four daughters by her new husband.

Ann visited her son on Blackstrap Road several times, yet Ricci never had anything nice to say about his mother to anyone. She was often the subject of cruel remarks made to his employees. Some speculate that he never forgave her for what he called her “abandonment.”

After the Riccis made their fortune, they began indulging more in leisure activities such as going out to eat, but they had no friends or associates outside Elan. They began to socialize with their lawyer Greg Tselikis and his wife Jackie. Tselikis came from a poor family, and had worked his way through law school, to a position with Bernstein, Shur, Sawyer, and Nelson, a prominent Portland law firm. He and Ricci became close and at one point even went duck hunting together, despite Ricci’s proclaimed aversion to killing animals. One source close to Ricci said “Greg was extraordinarily good to Joe. He’d help him out with things Joe knew absolutely nothing about. There was camaraderie between them. Neither had started out with a silver spoon in his mouth.”

Though they had a large staff, the Riccis both continued to work at Elan, but it was clear that it was Joe Ricci who ran the show. One former employee observed “It was like he was Jim Jones. He was our reality. It’s hard to explain, but Joe had a way of defining things as if his definition was the only one. We all would have swallowed Cyanide for him if he’d asked.” Another former staff member recalled Ricci’s knack for creating intimacy with people, for making them believe they were important to him, and to his projects.

“Occasionally he would financially assist poorer kids who had gone through the program. They didn’t have a college education and weren’t trained for any special work other than working at Elan, so Joe would hire them as staff therapists and give them more money than they’d be able to earn anywhere else. Sometimes he’d help them buy a house. But then Joe ended up owning these people. They’d be petrified of upsetting him. When they didn’t act exactly as he wanted them to act, he’d fire them or discredit them.”

In his marriage Ricci began employing the techniques he used at Elan. If his Sherry annoyed or angered him, she’d be punished. According to one former staffer he’d ‘shoot her down’ (an Elan term to describe the taking of authority away from someone who had misused it.) by humiliating her at staff meetings, or he’d purposely exclude her from decision-making, instructing people not to tell her something. “At first, we were led to believe that they had the perfect marriage. But after a while it was apparent it was far from it.”

Sometimes Ricci would disappear. When Sherry called Elan to find him, he wouldn’t speak with her. Once she was informed that he’d taken a blond social worker to Las Vegas. Ricci loved to gamble, and reportedly lost \$10,000 one night at the roulette table. Often his disappearances would last for days, even weeks. Sherry said she raised their sons virtually alone and felt like a single mother from the day they were born.

Ricci would insist on having female residents at Elan watch their sons. He’d pick the prettiest girls. Sherry thought he did it just to upset her. If she complained, he would tell her she was neurotic. One time a girl who had babysat at their house ‘copped to guilt’ (Elan term meaning admitting bad behavior.) She confessed she had taunted the Riccis’ son Noah, pretending he was a kitty. When he wanted to get off her lap, she wouldn’t let him and burnt him with her cigarette. Sherry was horrified, but Ricci reacted with disgust. He told Sherry she’d changed, and there was nothing wrong with the Elan residents babysitting their children.

Sherry became more isolated, and had no friends, other than her contacts at Elan. And at Elan her husband was the boss. Everybody took orders from him, even if it meant violating her rights. One day she was at home when she heard noise in her bedroom. It was a secretary from Elan going through her drawers and closets. Sherry said, “Joe had given her a key to the house, with instructions to

pack him a bag so he could take a trip.” Despite her objections the secretary refused to leave until she had done what Joe had sent her to do.

Living with Joe became too much. Sherry finally suffered a nervous breakdown in 1976 for which she was hospitalized. She had been in the hospital for three weeks when Ricci finally went to visit. A nurse, announcing his arrival, told Sherry to wheel herself out to the hall, near the nurse’s station to meet him. Joe approached and presented her, in full view of everyone, with an expensive diamond and sapphire necklace. All the nurses began exclaiming over the sparkling gems. “What a wonderful husband you have,” they said as she wheeled herself back into her room.

“That scene at the hospital was vintage Joe,” confirmed a former associate. “Everything was for show. He’d always need a group around him, and act out a role, usually one that made him look great to people who didn’t do any serious scrutinizing.”

During her hospital stay Sherry was given Thorazine. Occasionally friends from Elan would stop by. One time a staffer came to see her and broke down in tears. Sherry told her she was feeling better, only to discover that the tears were not for her. The staff member said she was concerned that Ricci was distraught over his wife’s illness. He had called a staff meeting at Elan and told everyone he was miserable because he could help people with emotional problems, but not his own wife.

After her breakdown Sherry went to therapy sessions, despite Ricci’s objection. She began to repair her self-esteem and became stronger. Until therapy she hadn’t shared her feelings with anyone. Having an objective third party gave her a different perspective. She became aware of being manipulated, and blindly following a pattern of behavior, simply because it was easier than resisting.

Sherry’s sister Julie had been a resident at Elan. Once when Julie had done something that didn’t seem to show enough respect for Ricci, Sherry scolded her. But Julie responded, “I’m not in awe of him, like you and the others!” The use of the word ‘awe’ stung Sherry, as she began to realize ‘awe’ was a poor foundation for marriage. She knew her sister’s observation had been accurate. She had spent years under her husband’s spell. She had grown older with him but had not matured. It was almost impossible for her to determine where she

ended, and he began. He led, and she followed. He had been her Pied Piper.

The couple's sex life was non-existent, so terrible, that Sherry thought it was amazing she ever got pregnant. She felt she was not attractive enough, rather than admit that he was simply not sexual, despite a strong male countenance, and an obvious eye for women.

After two years of therapy Sherry knew she had to start a new life. They talked about divorce, but Ricci was reluctant. Sherry later heard from their accountant that her husband feared a divorce would cost him too much money. He reportedly told the accountant that his wife wasn't getting a divorce, that she'd had one nervous breakdown, and he'd see to it that she had another. He said, it would be cheaper to put her in the Institute for Living in Connecticut than give her a divorce.

Ricci said that whether they got a divorce or not, he was going to buy Scarborough Downs, a harness racetrack and he wanted Sherry to be his partner. She was flabbergasted. They had been to the racetrack, ten miles south of Portland many times, but she had no idea he wanted to own it. It seemed the antithesis of Elan. She couldn't understand why he wanted to get involved with running a racetrack. They had started out helping people who had addictions. A racetrack, with its bars and gambling, created addictive behavior. She stared at him, and suddenly understood that he needed a lot of cash to buy the track and stalling the divorce would help his finances. If that didn't work, having her as his partner could tie up her share of any divorce settlement. She had gotten wise to his way of thinking. She knew then her survival depended on getting away from him. In November of 1978, she filed for divorce.

The following spring Ricci and Davidson formed Davric Maine Corporation to purchase Scarborough Downs for \$1.2 million. The previous owners gave them a \$750,000 mortgage. An additional \$425,000 in cash came from Elan, along with a \$75,000 loan from their bank, Depositors Trust of Southern Maine.

The details of the Ricci divorce were worked out by Greg Tselikis who represented Joe, while Sherry found another Portland attorney. They had numerous real estate holdings and other assets. Among these was their 100-acre estate in Falmouth, the Elan land and buildings in Poland Spring, Waterford and Parsonfield, Maine, a private plane, horse stables, a Bentley auto, a luxury

apartment complex, Scarborough Downs racetrack and various treasury bonds and cash.

Sherry agreed to give up claims to any of their real estate. She was allotted \$150,000 to purchase a new house for herself and her sons, some treasury bonds, and \$60,000 per year in alimony and child support. She was also given a promissory note for \$100,000 in cash. At the time Sherry's lawyer told her she was entitled to more, but observing her still fragile 98-pound frame, advised her to take her husband's offer, and move on.

Joe Ricci was a street fighter, and Sherry was too battle weary. After nearly ten years being Ricci's wife, having his two children, and working nearly full time at Elan, she gave up the businesses she helped create. The divorce became final October 23, 1979, six weeks shy of their tenth wedding anniversary.

Shortly after the divorce Ricci called a meeting at the Sheraton in South Portland to discuss both Elan and Scarborough Downs. He told staff members they were to have absolutely no contact with his ex-wife. Anyone found talking to her or having any communication with her would be fired.

Sherry realized that her divorce cost her all her old friendships, and guaranteed isolation from everybody except her children. Even her family, except for Julie, was unsympathetic. None of her relatives had ever been divorced. They blamed her for not making the marriage work because Ricci had convinced them it was her fault.

A month earlier on September 28, 1979, *Maine Times*, a statewide weekly newspaper featured a cover story: *Meet Maine's Most Unusual Millionaire*. The five-page article stated that Joe Ricci was "*the embodiment of the American dream.*" It compared his life story to a Horatio Alger tale of rags to riches triumph, citing his hard work, ambition, and perseverance in the face of great odds.

Ricci falsely told the story's reporter, Peter Dammann, that he grew up in rat infested squalor, and after being a heroin addict, ended up at Daytop Village, a very brutal drug rehabilitation program from which he graduated with flying colors. Ricci said he started DARTEC in Connecticut, got married, and took a third mortgage on his house to launch Elan. None of it was true.

Describing Elan, Ricci declared, “We help people find their identity, develop the internal controls they were lacking. We teach them life is a game of consequence.” He told Dammann “I want to do and try as many things in my life as I can,” noting, he would never do anything to compromise Elan because, he said “I’ve always believed that you should dance with the one who brung ya.”

## Chapter Three: Cash Cow

In the mid 1970s many of Elan's young residents lived on five isolated acres at a facility in Poland Spring Maine. Other residents were housed thirty miles north in Waterford on a road called Apple Blossom Lane. Fifty miles to the southwest was still another facility in Parsonfield, reserved for the most difficult residents. This building, with locks on the doors and bars on the windows, had once been a TB sanitarium.

In the early 1970s Elan received favorable press coverage because of Dr. Davidson's extensive contacts. But descriptions of Elan when it first began differ dramatically from later accounts. Particularly interesting are the contradictory statements about Elan, which came from Davidson and Ricci. It's not clear whether the program was misrepresented at the outset or changed dramatically as it grew.

Just after Elan opened in 1971 Davidson was interviewed for an article in *U.S. News and World Report*. The article quoted him as saying.

*"Therapeutic communities largely are run by ex-addicts who have become extremely sanctimonious, like all converted heathen. They shave their patient's heads, make them wear diapers, hang degrading signs on them, things like that. In our therapeutic community we do not do this. Our approach is to build self-esteem, and regard for others."*

In 1971 Ricci appeared on WGAN-TV in Portland describing the new therapeutic community as a drug treatment center that instills self-esteem, self-reliance, and a capacity to love in the individual. In a press report that appeared the day Elan opened its doors Ricci was quoted as saying "*We tailor the program to fit the individual, not the individual to fit the program.*"

It was not long before people who mattered knew about the new facility in rural Maine. Davidson, a powerful figure with contacts at Harvard University and Massachusetts General Hospital, networked his colleagues in many states for referrals. He also went to Washington D.C. to lobby for insurance coverage being extended to facilities such as Elan.

Many states referred their troubled teens. Juvenile officers and social workers who didn't know where to send their wards would pack them off to Elan. Wealthy parents felt safe listening to Ricci talk about what he could do for their kids. He would even offer to fly Elan's private plane to take them to his place in the woods, which he called "the Rolls Royce of adolescent treatment centers." During its first few years Elan lived a honeymoon type existence.

But all that changed one summer.

On July 22, 1975, a team of five investigators, a psychiatrist and four social workers from the Illinois Department of Child and Family Services visited Elan for a routine evaluation because more than ten of its state wards had been placed there. The team stayed for two days, talking with staffers and residents, traveling the grounds, observing groups and daily activities.

Investigators were aghast at the flagrant child abuse and violation of civil rights they witnessed. They called their superior, Mary Lee Leahy, who authorized them to immediately remove the children from Illinois. Leahy sent a telegram to Maine Governor, James Longley, outlining the serious infractions her team discovered, requesting he conduct a full-scale investigation into Elan's operation.

That same day, Don Schlosser, a spokesman for the Illinois Department of Child and Family Services, told the Associated Press that the department's evaluation team had "never seen anything quite so bizarre and degrading." He said, "The whole concept of this program seems to be a brain washing technique."

The next day Leahy followed up her telegram to Governor Longley with a letter summarizing some findings from her review team. *They included instances of "physical abuse and forced labor, such as spankings, punching one another in a boxing ring, and senseless ditch digging." She also cited "instances of handcuffing a child to a table and the pouring of a mixture of food and human feces over a resident's head, denial of food and recreation, improper medical care, and a total lack of privacy.*

She wrote:

*"Our Illinois team members found the Elan program abhorrent to all accepted*

*standards of childcare. The treatment model seems predicated on suspension of each child's liberties; they become automatons who conform to acceptable behavior patterns after they find it hopeless to resist the will of their 'masters.'"*

Elan had two hundred and seventeen residents, making each resident director responsible for approximately forty-five children. The evaluation team explained that all five resident directors were former drug addicts and graduates of the Elan program. None had a college degree or any prior experience in social services. One resident director in charge of a house, where seven of the Illinois residents lived, said he had a history of assault toward females. His third assault resulted in serious injury to the woman, which was the reason for his admission to Elan.

In addition to the five resident directors, twenty coordinators conducted most of the therapy groups. These coordinators were also former Elan residents. Some were recent Elan graduates, whose names still appeared on the present resident population sheet.

The Illinois evaluators explained the various bizarre forms of punishment for residents, which included '*the ring*', '*electric sauce*', '*ditch digging*', *handcuffs*, *straight jackets*, and *spankings*.

The ring was modeled after a regular boxing ring. A resident to be disciplined was placed in the center of a circle formed by other residents, given 16-ounce boxing gloves and headgear. The adolescent was then confronted with an opponent and forced to fight a round, which usually lasted a minute. If the person being punished was not beaten, he or she had to fight subsequent opponents until defeated. Residents used to defeat the person being punished were mostly large well-built boys, fighting both male and female residents. Two residents independently talked about a young female being forced into the ring. When she resisted, she was held down while residents attempted to tie boxing gloves on her hands. When that failed, she was sent into the ring bare fisted and without head gear. Investigators also cited an incident where a pregnant girl was put in the ring and defeated. Evaluators observed that residents could be sent to the ring for any infraction, including not sharing in discussion groups.

'Electric sauce' was the term used to describe a mixture of garbage, ketchup, mustard, cigarette butts and other refuse, which was poured over a person's head as a form of punishment. The report indicated that human feces was sometimes

included in this ‘sauce.’

Digging ditches was apparently still another reprimand. A day of digging ditches under surveillance was a common practice. After each ditch was dug the resident being punished would be required to fill it back up again and repeat the process for the duration of the punishment.

The use of handcuffs was also alleged. One resident explained he had been cuffed for about five hours for striking someone. Another had been ordered by a staff member to handcuff a girl to a table by placing the cuffs around her ankles.

The report explained that both Elan staff members and residents gave spankings to those deemed guilty of acting like babies. One of the resident directors, who had previously been identified as having a history of serious assaults on women, admitted he had spanked a female resident from Illinois.

Elan functioned as a separate society with its own dictionary of terms. A ‘general meeting’ was called after a resident failed to comply with program requirements. At this meeting everyone in the house gathered to verbally assault the guilty person. These meetings were considered a time of maximum confrontation, where the use of obscene, degrading, and vile language was encouraged. Sometimes the posse mentality of these meetings reached a crescendo with the residents charging at the subject, striking, kicking, and throwing things. One resident reported that he once had trouble pushing his way into the group to get close enough to personally attack another resident and was afraid, he might be disciplined for not enthusiastically participating.

The Illinois investigators wrote that they heard about an adolescent who had been tied to a pole and gagged with a rag. They wrote about a pitcher of chocolate milk, which had been dumped over another boy’s head. Other forms of punishment included scrubbing a floor with a tooth-brush, and cleaning toilet bowls with bare hands.

The investigators were also appalled by violations of privacy. All incoming mail for residents was intercepted, opened, and read by the Elan staff. If it was determined inappropriate for the resident to read it was confiscated or the objectionable material deleted. All outgoing mail to parents and others was censored. New residents could not write letters, make, or receive phone calls.

These activities were considered privileges to be earned. One resident reported he had letter writing privileges but chose not to write letters because he did not want them read by staff. Those who were permitted to make phone calls had their calls monitored.

During their two-day stay at Elan, members of the evaluation team observed group therapy sessions where personal insults, and attacks on individual family members were common. They wrote that verbal attacks from the staffers to the residents included: “*You mother fucking whore*”... “*You cock sucking, titty sucking, mother fucking asshole.*”

Team members reported that Elan’s resident nurse told them that all new residents were subjected to a strip search. The nurse revealed she got vaginal smears and did rectal exams on new female residents and secured semen specimens from new male residents to test for venereal disease. She said the semen specimen was obtained by giving a boy a small cup, directing him to a private room to masturbate and return with the sample. The evaluation team contacted physicians in charge of both public and private facilities to determine if masturbation was an acceptable procedure for obtaining a semen specimen. Each physician was shocked, confirming it was not medically acceptable. Nor was Elan’s registered nurse dispensing many medications, including controlled pharmaceuticals without a prescription.

Deprivation of food, lack of adequate recreation facilities, trained kitchen personnel, and clothing for residents were other concerns expressed in the report. One of the Illinois wards had his shoes taken away. During his six weeks at Elan, he had made repeated requests for shoes, but he was told if he had shoes he might run away. When this child was brought back to Chicago, he had blood poisoning in one foot.

The evaluation team’s report concluded there was “*absolutely no justification*” for the outrageous treatment of adolescents.

The team wrote:

“*Elan will argue that the evaluation team has taken occurrences out of context, and that contrary to the findings of the evaluation team, the incidents were in the best interests of the child. Regardless of the reasons given by Elan, excusing or*

*justifying the incidents, each incident reported is directly contrary to Illinois law and regulations, and under no circumstances can the agency permit any of its wards to reside at an institution where such events occur. These practices violate the child's civil rights and liberties and deprive him of his self-respect and dignity. Under no circumstances can the Department of Children and Family Services permit any child to be subjected to Elan."*

Joe Ricci was livid when Illinois pulled its wards and created negative publicity for Elan. His lawyers told him to downplay the controversy, try to keep a cap on it. But he came out fighting, threatening lawsuits for defamation of character and breach of contract.

An embarrassed state government in Maine immediately launched an inquiry into Illinois' allegations to explain how such things could be allowed to happen right under its nose. It sent a six-member evaluation team to Elan on July 31, 1975.

Governor Longley and David Smith, the Maine commissioner for Human Services, also made a much-heralded trip to the facility. When Longley received the official report from the Illinois evaluation team on August 5, he had Maine's Department of Human Services issue an interim report on its findings.

Maine officials wrote they found:

*"No evidence of unjustifiable denials of civil liberties or of mistreatment brutality or anything that could be considered abhorrent to all acceptable standards of childcare...The residents of Elan interviewed usually expressed newfound feelings of dignity, self-assurance, and mental wellbeing, and they attributed these feelings to the treatment they received at Elan."*

Responding to the charges of the ring, spankings and physical abuse Maine investigators wrote: *"One of the cardinal rules of the Elan program is that the use of physical violence, by either a staff member, or a resident is strictly outlawed."*

The Maine team defended the use of 'the ring.'

It wrote: *"Only acts of repeated physical violence result in a person being placed in the ring where rounds last about one minute and the participants are*

*evenly matched.”*

Responding to the Illinois charges of Elan spanking its residents the Maine evaluators again chose to justify this behavior, though it was in direct contradiction to Elan’s stated policy of no corporal punishment.

They wrote: “*It is recognized and accepted by residents as an ultimate technique for dealing with rare and unusual behavior. There was, however, an isolated incident which was recognized as excessive by other staff members and which therefore resulted in the temporary suspension of the staff member responsible.*”

The Maine team, comprised of four lawyers, a Ph.D., and a psychiatrist, found “*no evidence to support the charge that residents were forced to dig ditches.*”

The team wrote: “*The work assignments performed by the residents are beneficial and integral part of the Elan treatment program and that such work assignments contribute significantly to the development of responsibility, self-respect and pride.*”

Responding to Illinois’s other charges regarding lack of privacy and violation of civil rights the Maine contingent wrote, “*We found that the degree of privacy afforded Elan residents is acceptable within the context of the entire program.*”

Elan filed a civil complaint in Cumberland County Superior court charging Mary Lee Leahy, the five members of the Illinois evaluation team and the Illinois Department of Family and Child Services with defamation of character, breach of contract, and interference with business relations. It asked for \$6.1 million in actual damages and \$4 million in punitive damages.

The next day the state of Illinois, on behalf of the Illinois wards, filed an action in the U.S. District Court in Chicago, charging the Elan Corporation and three of its officers with mistreatment of Illinois wards. It requested \$750,000 in damages, and \$36,998 in reimbursement of payment by Illinois to Elan for childcare services.

Illinois attorney, Dick Devine, who handled the matter said the state also filed a myriad of other actions in Illinois, and Maine. In the end all parties eventually settled with no money passing hands. Devine recalled, “ We just wanted to get

our kids out of that place and prevent them from ever going back.” He noted that some of those sent to Elan were not even delinquent, but merely orphans.

Fifteen years later, Devine vividly remembered his interactions with Elan and was stunned to learn Elan was still operating.

The publicity generated from Illinois’s claims of abuse caused other states to send their own investigators to determine how their wards were being treated. Evaluators arrived from Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts.

Ken Zaretsky, a teenage staff member at Elan during these state investigations, told me that everything was covered up after the Illinois investigators came, and everyone did a good job of softening the program for subsequent investigations:

“We lied through our teeth. What we couldn’t cover up we admitted to as the exception rather than the rule. The residents were thrilled when the place was overrun with investigators, because they had a real fun time. We laid off everybody then. But everything the Illinois investigators said was true, every word of it.”

Zaretsky was considered one of Elan’s success stories. He was in the program in 1971, graduated, and became a senior staff member, spending a total of five years at Elan. He believed in Elan and Joe Ricci. He said, “We all thought Joe was God.”

But nearly fifteen years later he admitted his scars from Elan still ran deep, that he felt the aftershock of all the humiliation. He told me he regretted the abuse he perpetrated on the residents when he became a staff member:

“ But I was brainwashed. I may have abused someone, but I was a victim too. It can be compared to a mother in the concentration camps pushing the buttons on her children in the ovens. How can you fault her for that? ”

Zaretsky came from Illinois, though he was not a ward of the state. He was one of Elan’s private referrals from a doctor by the name of Marvin Schwartz. “Marvin was known as Mr. Adolescent Illinois,” recalled Zaretsky, indicating Schwartz “single handedly built Elan with his referrals. Schwartz and Gerry Davidson went back a long way. I found out later when I worked at Elan that

Schwartz would get a kickback for every kid he sent there and that's clearly why he did it."

Zaretsky said he and many others who were placed at Elan in the early and mid 1970s were not the hard-core deviant kids people imagined.

"I was a normal kid, given the time in our country... I believed Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin were good guys, and President Nixon was the bad guy. Was my behavior antisocial? Yeah, but it was an anti-social period in our history."

Zaretsky shared the story of his best friend Neil Saxner, also a former Elan resident. After graduating and working at Elan, he and Saxner thought they would run a program like Elan in the Chicago area. But Saxner was cited for child abuse:

"Neil thought he was Joe Ricci. He talked and walked like him. He even married a woman named Sherry. But when he realized he couldn't be Joe, the pressure became too great, and he killed himself." Citing suicides by residents who graduated and became staff members, he observed, "It's frightening to realize how many casualties there are from that place."

When I spoke by phone with Zaretsky he told me he feared Joe "had placed a time bomb in each of us." Zaretsky died suddenly on February 6, 2011. He was fifty-four years old.

## Chapter Four: The therapeutic community

In March of 1979 *Corrections Magazine* featured a depth story about Elan: “*Does its bizarre regimen transform troubled youths or abuse them?*”

This article explained the center’s rapid growth was a reflection of trends in American corrections over the past ten years. People had become disillusioned with conventional vocational and educational programs for teens, and turned their attention to therapeutic communities, which had been operating on the fringe of the corrections system.

Philip Taft, the author of the article, explained that the father of all these therapeutic communities was Synanon, the California community of alcoholics and drug addicts, which bred branches throughout the west. According to Taft, Synanon graduates started similar programs all over the country, including Daytop Village in New York, which helped inspire Elan. Taft wrote, “*Elan’s millionaire founder and executive director, Joe Ricci, was one of Daytop’s greatest success stories.*” Elan was subject to comparison with its spiritual progenitor, Synanon, which was in the process of disintegration after the arrest of two of its members and its founder, Chuck Dederich, for allegedly putting a rattlesnake in the mailbox of a lawyer who brought a suit against the group. (Dederich later committed suicide.)

Taft traveled to Maine to visit Elan, and spoke with social workers, law enforcement officials and others responsible for referring clients there. He described some unusual impressions in his article.

“*There is a rain of curses and shouts amidst a confusing chaos of teenagers. Some give commands, others furiously scrub floors, dressed in bizarre costumes — diapers and tin foil and rags. Some have huge signs around their necks. Others scribble on note pads. They are intent on something, just what is uncertain. And no one is smiling. No one.*

*Residents are made to wear costumes that illustrate their unacceptable behavior. For example, one boy whose supervisor thought the sun rose and set on him was made to dress like Caesar. Another “cry baby” was given a diaper and bottle, and others carried signs like ‘HELP! I am an emotionally crippled monster.’”*

Taft quoted an ex-Elan employee who said, “They beat an emotionally slow kid in the snow. He was just black and blue for weeks.” Another former Elan employee, Donna Pizzi, told Taft she found herself wondering about the “blank looks” on the faces of both staff and residents. “There’s a lot of repetition of creeds and philosophies without much thinking.”

Perhaps most revealing about Taft’s article were his conversations with Gerry Davidson and Joe Ricci. Davidson told him, “We’re a community of self-help like the Mormons.” He said he had been a passionate observer of group phenomena and compared Elan to the Nazi concentration camps of World War II.

*“I’ve always been fascinated with the phenomenon of identification with the aggressor,”* Davidson was quoted, recalling how some Jews after their release from the camps took on the leather dress of their guards. *“At Elan I want to provide a good aggressor, a responsible, good role model. And that role model is Joe Ricci.”*

Outlining the program philosophy for the reporter Ricci emphasized, “*We allow no sex, no drugs, no physical violence.*” When questioned about the charge of Elan fostering dependency, Ricci grumbled, calling it “*A crock of shit.*”

Talking to Taft about that summer of 1975 when Illinois made its allegations, Ricci angrily told him: “*It was a raid from the start.*” He claimed that the members of the Illinois team were “very unprofessional.” He said, “*They got drunk at one meal, and then came back to Elan to work.*”

Both Ricci and Davidson refused to disclose their salaries but told Taft that the profit margin in 1979 was about ten to fifteen percent of the \$1,200 per resident’s monthly tuition. Using those figures Taft estimated that of the \$4.3 million in fees from the previous year, the annual profit split between the two men was between \$350,000 and \$547,500.

Taft revealed that, though operating for eight years, Elan had never done any follow up on former residents until about a year and a half earlier. Of the twelve states that referred children to Elan, only four had ever done any follow up, and what had been done was limited and informal. Just Maryland, Rhode Island, Oregon, and Vermont surveyed a total of seventy-one former Elan residents.

They found twelve were in jail, seventeen were working or in school and forty-two were, in the words of one official, “living marginal lives” that included petty crime, frequent unemployment, and overuse of alcohol and drugs.

These state statistics certainly differed from Elan’s eighty percent success rate and the claim in its promotional literature that most former residents were “*living healthy productive lives.*”

In September of 1979 Joe Ricci sat down with Peter Dammann, a reporter for a weekly newspaper. When the subject of the Illinois Investigation came up Ricci told him the evaluation team was a “*hit squad’ sent out by Governor Dan Walker to get headlines and secure his re-election... was supposed to make him look like a real human macho dude.*” Ricci told Dammann that Elan had been vindicated, that the Illinois legislature had endorsed the program. He mentioned that the Chicago newspaper that ‘crucified’ him later did a feature follow up of one of the wards that had fled back to Elan to complete its program and was leading a productive life. Ricci did not reveal that Elan spent a great deal of money employing the services of a Chicago based public relations firm to repair its image or that the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services still refused to place children at Elan. Instead in Illinois, Elan was relying on private pay residents from wealthy families, referred to the program by Dr Davidson’s friend, Dr. Marvin Schwartz.

In early 1981, nearly six years after the explosive Illinois investigation of Elan, the Rhode Island Office of the Child Advocate was asked to conduct a study of the Elan facility by Rhode Island Judge Edward Healey, because of allegations, which surfaced during a juvenile proceeding in his court. This investigation involved seven health care professionals including two psychiatrists, a psychiatric nurse, a sociologist and two attorneys from the Child Advocate’s Office. The team conducted an on-site visit on February 27 and 28. Researchers reviewed each of the files relating to one hundred and thirty Rhode Island children that had been placed at Elan from the time the state first utilized the program. This resulted in a forty-page report that cited a litany of abuses.

The Rhode Island investigators were deeply disturbed that there was no board of directors or any effective institutional review mechanism. The evaluators met with both Ricci and Davidson, and discovered Davidson was not involved with the daily operation, and unable to respond accurately regarding the program’s

use of the ring, and isolation cells. Many of the Rhode Island residents interviewed were unable to identify Dr Davidson as even being a member of the Elan staff, though his responsibilities included psychiatric and medical care for residents.

The evaluators were stunned by the absence of professionals. The team was introduced to three psychologists, but each had been with Elan for a brief time, and like Davidson, seemed unaware of the day-to-day operation. Residents interviewed showed no awareness of even the existence of professional staff. The sole responsibility for clinical treatment at Elan seemed to rest with former graduates who had undergone “in-service” staff training by Joe Ricci.

The evaluation team believed that the lack of professional staff explained why Elan did not perform a thorough clinical assessment of each child. The team wrote:

*“Upon arrival no thorough intake assessment is performed aside from educational assessment...Written individualized treatment plans are not developed as part of the intake process. Placement within the program is based solely upon age and education.”*

The team came to much the same conclusion as the Illinois and Massachusetts investigators. *“The climate of Elan is confrontation,”* they wrote, reporting that the emphasis is control and containment in an atmosphere that was shockingly described to them by Gerry Davidson as being *“paramilitary”* and *“like the Moonies.”*

After reviewing extensive case files regarding its Rhode Island residents, the evaluators stated that Elan’s success rate was “grossly exaggerated.” They asked Elan to provide information regarding its specific standards for determining the success rate it advertised.

Answering this request Gerry Davidson wrote:

*“We feel we have been successful when a graduate is comparatively self-supporting or is attending school and does not get into trouble with the authorities. The specific rate of success for Rhode Island children is seventy-five percent.”*

Elan could not provide the evaluators with any data to substantiate a seventy-five percent success with Rhode Island residents. The evaluation team subsequently reviewed files for the Rhode Islanders placed at Elan. It ran the name of each former resident through the Bureau of Criminal Identification to obtain existing documentation of criminal offenses, which might have been committed after returning to Rhode Island from Elan. It discovered that sixty percent had been arrested for criminal violations. They determined the arrest rate a conservative measure of failure for the former Elan residents since the records did not reflect instances of neglect or abuse of children, mental health institutionalization, or other indicators of social or family disruption.

The evaluators concluded: “*Elan’s claims for success with Rhode Island children seems more self-serving than scientific and reflects adversely on the credibility of the Elan administration.*

## **Chapter Five: In their words**

Joe Ricci and his lawyers ignored my request for Elan success stories to be included in this book. My conversations with nearly two dozen people who were at Elan at different periods reveal striking similarities, though these people come from five different states and varied economic and social circumstance.

Stephen Smith, who had been a ward of the state of Connecticut since he was six years old when his mother went to prison for robbery, was packed off to Elan by a social worker. Steven had shot his neighbor in the butt with a pellet gun, because he kicked his dog. She gave him the choice of either going to jail or Elan. “I chose Elan because she told me it was like a summer camp in the Maine woods,” he recalled from the warden’s office of Maine State Prison, where he was then serving a ten-year term for burglary.

Stephen was boyish looking, small boned with honey blond hair pulled back in a ponytail, when I visited him in prison. Yet his eyes portrayed a deep penetrating sadness of an old man.

Though he was twenty-nine years old, the images from his teen years were still haunting, enough for his voice to crack when he talked about being raped by another Elan resident. It happened when he and three other boys and two girls were left in a semi-isolation room for more than a week.

“I don’t care how personal you get,” he told me when we met. “The most important thing is that the truth comes out about Ricci. He has no business screwing up kids and making a fortune doing it. The state takes kids from messed up families, but they put them in places worse. If I was not messed up before I got to Elan, I certainly was afterwards.”

“When I first got there, I couldn’t believe it. Everybody was screaming and beating on each other. I didn’t want to talk to anybody. I didn’t have a drug problem. I’d be sitting in the groups, and they’d want me to talk about what I was hooked on. I said, ‘Listen I don’t have any of that,’ and they’d all say, ‘Oh yeah? sure!’ as if I was denying it. Then they’d ask me if I hated my mother. They’d read my file in front of everyone, things about my mother and her criminal record. I didn’t dig that, so I just didn’t say anything. Then when I shut

up, they accused me of intimidating the group, said I was doing some violent act for not opening up. So, everyone once in a while they'd set up a general meeting, and then throw me in the boxing ring until I lost. I tried to run away all the time. It's the only thing I ever did; try to run away every chance I got. I tried about seven times, but they always caught me because they had this posse that would be rewarded by Ricci if they caught someone trying to run away."

Stephen Smith said the first time he met Joe Ricci was at a general meeting called by a staff member named Jeff Gottlieb. He provided this account of that day:

"Ricci came in and I was called out, along with a girl named Nancy, and another girl Marie, two guys, Ray, and Johnny, and another kid named Sean. We were all sitting down around a table, and Ricci announced, 'We have some cancer in this house, and any good surgeon knows the best way to get rid of cancer is to cut it out, before it spreads. 'Then Ricci says 'Now we're going to put you upstairs in one of the rooms. It was a room about the size of a cell. They boarded up the windows and the door and locked it. Ricci said, 'Whatever goes on in there goes on.' It was in July. I know it was in July, because it was my sixteenth birthday the next day. It was horrible. Six of us all stuck in there together. The guys— Ray and Johnny would take turns beating each other. Ray would pound his head until he got tired. And they'd take turns having sex with the two girls. One of them didn't care, but the other girl didn't want to, but they made her. Sean and Ray would keep her food, and that's how they got to her. The day I turned sixteen, I mentioned that it was my birthday. Sean picked me up and said 'Oh it's your birthday, I have something to give you...' He started to hit me in the face and stuff, and then, well, he raped me in there.

After Sean did that stuff with me, he made me do it with the others. I think it had a lot to do with me not having normal relationships with girls. It's really screwed me up, and during the past years I've gone from blaming my mother, or my social worker Mrs. Daley, for what happened to me at Elan. But I realize it was really Joe Ricci's fault. He was just in it for the money. He was running a business and that's all it was to him."

Other punishments Stephen detailed included cleaning toilets with his bare hands, wearing signs, and doing meaningless chores. In the summer, he says he was forced to walk a mile wearing a winter coat:

“I’d have to get rocks out of the water, and fill up the wheelbarrow, and then empty them out, and then fill the wheelbarrow, and go back down to the water. Other times I’d dig ditches and fill them up again. The whole time they’d be one or two people watching and hollering to hurry up. It was totally meaningless...and this was all just because I wouldn’t talk in groups, or I’d try to run away... “One time I tried to talk to some people who came up from Chicago to do some kind of investigation. I never got to talk though.

Stephen didn’t hesitate to compare Elan with the maximum-security prison where he was incarcerated. “Elan is much worse. Here there’s a lot of shit. But I get a chance for some solitude, to read, and I’m going to college. I’ve also gotten to learn woodworking and make some money in the prison store. At Elan, there was nothing positive. It was pure hell. You know the worst thing is the judge that sentenced me here for ten years lectured me, telling me I blew the opportunity I had at Elan. I don’t understand how the courts can legitimize a guy like Ricci who has harmed so many mixed up kids.”

Corrine Lowery was referred to Elan in 1979 when she was fourteen years old. That was four years after the Illinois report citing child abuse, and wards of the Illinois were no longer being sent to Elan. But Lowery was a private placement from an upper middle-class family, who happened to have Gerry Davidson’s friend, Marvin Schwartz for a doctor.

When we spoke, she was nine months pregnant, a twenty-four-year-old well-dressed, woman, the mother of a two-year-old daughter. She said she wanted to talk about her teenage years at Elan to “set the record straight.”

Lowery was twelve years old, and an honor student, when she experienced conflicts with her mother’s boyfriend who lived in her house.

“My dad died in 1975,” she explained. “My mother was confused. She had three kids, and no real income. This guy was helping her out—and well, he was a child abuser.” She said her mother kicked him out for a while. But then she took him back, and that’s when all hell broke loose. “They made me out to be a liar because of what I said about him.”

Lowery started skipping school and one day she was asked to talk to someone from her school, but it was a ruse. She said, “There was Dr. Schwartz’s

associate, Dr. Andrews. I was just grabbed and taken to Chicago Lake Shore Hospital.”

Lowery stayed in the mental ward at the hospital for four of five months. “I was given no therapy,” she said. “Dr. Schwartz would occasionally come to see me and fall asleep in a chair by my bed. He was weird. Every troubled kid who had Dr. Schwartz for a doctor was sent to Elan.”

“I was drugged and, locked up for nearly five months. I wasn’t a kid who did drugs. I never even touched drugs. I have a heart problem too, but there they were shooting me up with all kinds of medicine. After a while I couldn’t even see or walk straight. Dr. Schwartz told my mom I needed structure in my life, and he knew of this school in Maine, which was just what I needed. I think he told her I’d be much better in just eight or nine months.

My mother and I flew to Maine. The first two days my mom was there for the orientation, so they made it look real good. We went down to the lake. I really didn’t think it was that bad. I thought it might be great. It was a relief to be out of the hospital, at a place that didn’t have bars on the windows, where there wasn’t a quiet room with padded walls, and hospital beds. But I had no idea what was ahead. I had absolutely no idea. I would have taken the bars on the windows and the Thorazine... They yelled at me about my father dying... I’d stand there and listen to them saying ‘ You did this because your father died, and you feel it’s your fault.’ I was thinking that my dad had a heart attack in his sleep. I had nothing to do with that. I mean the stuff was just bizarre, and for a young mind confusing.”

Lowry recalled her experiences with Joe Ricci at Elan;

“I had night guard duty at the trailer where he and Dr. Davidson had their offices. I would go over with another girl, and Joe would tell us to watch out for what he called ‘gorillas,’ people that were out to get him. He told us to look for anyone walking on top of the trailer and listen for any strange noises while he was inside sleeping on a pull-out couch. It was very unusual - two fifteen-year-old girls guarding him. One night we heard a noise, and he jumped up and ran out with a shotgun. He swore someone was going to get him.”

“I think Joe wanted me out of Elan.” I’d try to talk to people because there were

a lot of kids, I knew from Lakeshore Hospital sent there by Dr. Schwartz. I'd talk to them like friends and say 'Isn't this bull shit?' But you weren't supposed to talk to people; you were supposed to confront them. Joe noticed I didn't do that, and he didn't like it. No matter what the reason was for being there, it was assumed everyone was on drugs. All the girls were viewed as provocative little sluts, and the boys were kind of perverted, but Joe didn't seem to pick on the boys as much. He singled out a few girls for special treatment. Though I don't know the exact relationships he had with them, there were a lot of rumors. I even heard he did drugs with some of them."

Lowery told me she and another girl named Mary were once allowed to have free dinner and a couple of drinks at Scarborough Downs as a special treat for dog sitting at Ricci's house. (Though at sixteen they were under legal drinking age.) On the way back they asked the driver of the Elan van to stop at a Stop'n Go where they bought candy. When they got back to Elan, Ricci was angry. "Joe screamed at us, and called us 'ungrateful, manipulative little bitches.'" We didn't know what we had done. We learned it was because we asked the driver to stop on the way home.

Lowry was a staff coordinator at Elan, a step away from graduation, but got shot down because she was influencing others, 'corrupting them.' She was told to leave, given no notice the day before Easter of 1984 and not allowed to say good-bye to anyone.

Talking about her life since leaving Elan, she was quiet and thoughtful, choosing her words carefully:

"I always wanted to be a doctor, and I loved science. I probably could have done it too, but I was just locked up for so long. I couldn't stand any more discipline... I don't dwell on my time at Elan, but it's always there as a flashback... If I ever felt I couldn't control my daughter, I'd feel better just locking her up in a closet and tossing her a meal. It would be less abusive. People need to stay away from people like Joe Ricci. He will stop at nothing to get what he wants. I first realized what he was really like when I started going over to his trailer, and to his house. If people were in his way, he'd buy them off. I saw the way he'd throw his money around. When I was at his house, he'd have words with his girlfriend, and then tell her to go shopping. Joe Ricci is scum."

Sitting upright in her chair from the kick of the baby in her womb, she took a deep breath before she continued, talking fervently:

“There are people who are honestly struggling to make it in life, you know-good people. And then you have a jerk like Joe Ricci ruining kids’ lives. It’s disgusting. I’m just one person. How many kids have been there since Elan opened? I’ve been in touch with some of the kids that were there with me, and they were all worse off after going to Elan, totally unable to function afterwards. I don’t know what ever happened to a good friend of mine. I tried to help her, but she just seemed to go berserk. I’m stubborn and managed not to get brainwashed. I think that’s why I survived. I never believed in Joe Ricci.”

Dave Elder was second in command during the early days of Elan, an assistant executive director, directly under Joe Ricci. He had been a resident, and then a graduate working his way up the Elan hierarchy. He told a reporter researching an article that appeared in *Maine Times* that Elan’s encounter groups were “*tools to vent your feelings...a way to deal with the community.*” Nevertheless, he found the pressure Ricci placed upon him overwhelming. After leaving Elan, he drove a taxi in Portland for a while, was married, and had a baby on the way when he took his own life. According to one observer, Ricci was furious when he learned that Elder had killed himself and forbade any Elan staffer to pay last respects.

John Ricci was Joe Ricci’s first cousin, the son of Bamboo’s brother Tom. Tall, well groomed, and handsome enough to pass for an actor in a soap opera, he spoke in quiet phrases about the pain his cousin caused. Like many others he sketched a grisly picture of life at Elan. He continually referred to Joe Ricci as “my cousin,” and talked about the family’s unwillingness to see him as he really was until it was too late. He said, “My cousin was always somewhat larger than life. We all went from feeling very proud to have a member of the family like him to feeling very disrespected by him.”

John and his older brother, Tommy, both went to Elan, graduated, and became staff members counseling other teenagers like themselves.

“I bought my cousin’s program hook, line, and sinker. Joe had this God-like greatness. A kid doesn’t see the reasons behind the reasons for actions. All I saw was a charismatic, flamboyant, very powerful figure that got respect, and I

idolized that.”

John played the role of house boxer. At over six feet he was sometimes sixty pounds heavier than the people he opposed.

“I was taking care of one hundred and eight kids, putting them in the boxing ring, keeping them in restraints, when I barely had my own act together. I hated to do it, but I wanted to get along in the program. I feel guilty about some of the things I did at Elan, but I can somewhat selfishly alleviate that by saying that we were all victims of Joe’s regime.”

John’s brother Tommy left Elan much more messed up than he was before he went there, lost touch with family and became a drug-using drifter. In June of 1989 Tommy’s body was found at the bottom of the Ventura River in California.

Many former Elan residents and staff members indicated Ricci had sexual relations with some of the female residents but were afraid to say it on the record. But John said he knew of two Elan residents his cousin “slept with.”

After graduating from Elan John became heavily involved in drugs with a cocaine habit costing between \$500 to \$700 a week. Eventually, he cleaned up and went to Florida where he worked as a tile layer’s assistant making \$12 an hour. It was there that he says he finally got in touch with his feelings.

Tom Agos spoke to me from Gurnee, Illinois, a posh Chicago suburb where he was working as a police officer. He was sent to Elan in 1974 when he was fourteen years old. He had some run-ins with the law and had experimented with drugs. His parents hospitalized him at a Chicago area hospital, and Dr. Marvin Schwartz, referred him to Elan. He graduated after two years and worked at Elan as an assistant director until 1978.

He says There were a lot of scare tactics, a lot of intimidation, and a lot of humiliation. *It was basically if you misbehave, we'd beat the snot out of you.*” Agos admits as a staff member he perpetuated the Elan philosophy and declared:

“I’m not proud to say I worked there. At the time I really believed I was doing the right thing, but as I went on in life, I found out that Joe Ricci and his band of merry men were not really the Gods I thought they were. But to a screwed-up

kid, they were impressive.”

During a phone conversation from the Gurnee police station Agos confirmed that electric sauce, the ring, and spankings all occurred with regularity. He said, “Corporal punishment was used quite often, and I have the x-rays of a broken nose to prove it.”

Looking back at his time at Elan, Agos recalled a few transformations of staffers that were quite shocking. He mentioned one person, Alice Quinn, one of the first staff members.

“She was hired fresh out of college, had no experience. I watched her change before my eyes. It was unbelievable. After a few months on the job, she kind of became Joe. He remembered a former secretary at Elan, Sharon Terry, the person who filled the staff’s orders for sundries. “She was one of the office girls, very pleasant, very nice, but as Joe gave her more responsibility, she became a tyrant.”

## **Chapter Six: Never turn your back on a Sleeping tiger.**

In 1981 Joe Ricci and his partner Dr. Gerald Davidson had been in business for over a decade. Davidson's success seemed predictable. He had studied at prestigious schools and taught at Harvard. Ricci's success was unusual. He had never finished high school and spent much of his life in institutions, first as a patient, later as a low paid worker.

Ricci enjoyed his wealth, even flaunted it. He drove a Mercedes sports car, owned a Bentley, wore flashy clothes, and had a luxurious house.

Joe Ricci, the millionaire high school dropout, who ran a treatment center for troubled adolescents and a racetrack, was an enigma. And in 1981 FBI agents, a state bank investigator, and bank officers drew some conclusions, which would have serious ramifications.

Ricci and Davidson had been doing business at Portland's office of Depositors Trust bank for four years, had a \$1 million line of credit, and \$800,000 in outstanding loans. The businesses in their holding company included Elan, Scarborough Downs, and The Williamsburg, an upscale apartment complex in Portland's fashionable western promenade. Their credit rating was excellent. Both men drew more than \$250,000 per year in salary and felt secure in their banking relationship with Depositors. But unknown to them there was a fraud investigation going on at their bank.

On November 16, 1981, the chairman of the board of Depositors' parent company, Wallace Haselton, and the bank holding company's chief counsel, Frank Chapman, met with Maine Attorney General James Tierney, and Tierney's criminal division chief to determine if criminal action had taken place at Depositors' Portland bank. One of the division's investigators, Maine native, Owen Colomb, was assigned to the case.

Haselton was worried there might be problem loans at Depositors other than those being investigated, and that organized crime might be involved. Haselton was nervous about the organized crime issue because it had come up before. Previously his bank had filed an answer to an interrogatory that said Depositors Trust Corporation was at one time a lender to a borrower who had organized

crime connections. Though the individual was not named, Haselton apparently ruminated about it. He was also worried that an embezzlement at a small branch five years before had Mafia connections. Sources say he had a constant fear that organized crime might infiltrate his bank.

Haselton communicated his fear to Colomb. It resulted in a subpoena to the bank, which gave Colomb access to all bank records. Colomb noted that Joseph J. Ricci was the bank's largest borrower with his \$1 million line of credit. He thought he remembered Ricci's name from the mid 1970s when he had been with the Boston office of the FBI. He knew Ricci as the owner of Scarborough Downs and thought the name might have appeared in one of the FBI informant files as being involved in crime.

Three weeks later, Colomb and another investigator met with FBI agents, Gary Barnes, chief of the Portland Maine bureau office, and his assistant, William Crate. According to court records, Crate told Colomb, that he had heard Ricci was connected to organized crime and could be involved in fixing races at Scarborough Downs. He also said he had heard Ricci had some knowledge of the killing of Little Joe Napolitano, a reputed Mafia figure and a native of South Portland, Maine who was murdered gangland style and discovered in the trunk of an abandoned car in 1978 in New York.

On December 17, 1981, Colomb told Haselton he had heard from the FBI that Joe Ricci had ties to organized crime and may have been involved with Joey Napolitano's death. It didn't take long for the news to circulate. Bank president Joel Stevens heard the accusations from auditor Bernier. The next day Bernier contacted FBI agent Barnes to ask about Ricci. Barnes said as far as he knew Joe Ricci was not a dangerous individual. But during that conversation Barnes made it clear that he could not discuss any of the information Bernier was trying to obtain, because it was against FBI policy to disclose such data.

Four days later the bankers had a meeting regarding Joe Ricci and decided to terminate their relationship with him. Haselton wrote a memo to bank President Stevens.

*"Let us be very clear on one thing. I do not want to continue with those accounts identified to you and me today. I don't care what balances or other relationships they may have, let's get them eased out. We will lose otherwise."*

Two days after that memo, officers of the bank met with lawyers from their law firm, Bernstein, Shur, Sawyer, and Nelson who, in an ironic twist, were also Ricci and Davidson's corporate counsel. The bank authorized the lawyers to tell Joe Ricci only that an "unattributed source" had advised them that certain regulating agencies were investigating him as a leading figure in organized crime, who could have arranged a murder.

On December 29, 1981, Ricci got a call from his lawyer, Greg Tselikis, his counsel, and confidant to inform him about the allegations, attributing the source to 'a prominent Portland businessman.' Ricci demanded Tselikis tell him the origin of the rumor, but he said he could not. Then in early January Depositors denied Ricci's request for a \$125,000 loan.

Ricci called his loan officer, Leo Amato, and asked if the denial had anything to do with his Italian background, which he was sensitive about. Amato said that it did not but told him there were people in the bank who had questions about where he and his partner get their money and how they got it, since Elan was such a fantastic moneymaker.

On January 11, 1982, bank president Joel Stevens wrote officially terminating Ricci and Davidson's line of credit at Depositors.

*"Please rest assured that no personal prejudice toward you is intended or implied,"* the letter stated, noting that the decision was based on changes in policy, *"and that "...no useful purpose could be served by a meeting to discuss this situation."*

Ricci realized the bank must be privy to the Mafia rumor Tselikis mentioned. But it took longer for him, to learn that his lawyers got their information directly from the bank.

Greg Tselikis arranged a meeting on January 19, 1982, between, Ricci, Agent Crate, and Crate's boss Tom McGeorge of the FBI to determine exactly what information the FBI had about Joe Ricci of Falmouth, Maine. During this meeting it was established there were no ongoing investigations involving him. Joe Ricci then set his sights on the bank. He said he wanted justice, his \$125,000 loan, his line of credit and reputation reinstated, and threatened a lawsuit.

Shortly thereafter Greg Tselikis informed Ricci that he could no longer represent him or the bank in the lawsuit matter, due to conflict-of-interest laws. On January 20, 1982, Tselikis referred Ricci to the Boston law firm of Mintz, Levin, Cohn, Ferris, Glovsky, and Popeo. Robert Popeo of that firm agreed to handle Ricci's case. Popeo called Haselton and threatened a \$41 million lawsuit, the net worth of Depositors, if they did not grant Ricci his \$125,000 loan. Haselton told Popeo that he ought to be suing the FBI because the FBI gave them the misinformation. He suggested to Popeo that if he thought he had a legitimate legal action it was against the FBI and not his bank.

The bank had been unprepared for Ricci's protestations of innocence, which they heard first confidentially through their mutual lawyer Tselikis, and then through Popeo. They subsequently arranged a meeting between the bank officers, and agents Colomb, and Barnes to ensure the accuracy of the negative information about Ricci.

In sworn depositions Barnes admitted being questioned about the allegations and said that the FBI was 'comfortable' with its position. Bankers Haselton and Chapman both gave testimony that FBI agent Barnes led them to believe they were on target with their concerns about Ricci.

In April of 1982 a merger between Depositors Trust Corporation and Canal Bank was completed, after a bitter takeover battle between Depositors and another Maine bank. The merged banks became the largest bank holding company in northern New England with resources totaling \$850 million. Soon officials at Key Bank Inc. of Albany subsequently met with Wallace Haselton to explore another merger. The Key Bank holding company had assets of more than \$3 billion and operated 200 offices throughout New York State.

By July Ricci's Boston attorney, Charles Popeo, attempted to arrange a meeting with Haselton, Chapman, and Ricci to resolve the Mafia issue without legal action, but was unsuccessful. Popeo sent another letter to Chapman enclosing a draft complaint, charging the bank with violating the Equal Credit Opportunity Act, the Fair Credit Disclosure Act, breach of contract, and defamation. He stated that he would file the suit if his client's dispute was not resolved during the next month. At this point bank officials felt secure in their attitude toward their former client. They did not budge.

On August 30, 1982, the day after Ricci's 37th birthday, Popeo filed a complaint in U.S. District Court in Portland seeking \$41 million in damages. It stated that Ricci and Davidson's businesses lost \$7 million because of the bank, and Joe Ricci's reputation had been ruined. The complaint claimed that the sudden revocation of credit was done on the basis of Ricci's national origin and the conclusion that Ricci therefore was connected to organized crime.

The following day Joe Ricci called a press conference to tell everyone about his suit, and the ugly rumor that had him unjustly accused.

"This strikes right at the heart of what I am as a human being," he told the press. "It's like saying you're a rapist or a criminal. Because what the bank is saying when they say you're involved in organized crime is that you're a vicious animal with no conscience, that you're a man of no integrity, that you have no sense of right or wrong."

Ricci sweated profusely in front of the TV cameras, as he sputtered allegations about a conspiracy to put him out of business.

"Portland is a small town. When they cut off your credit, try to get another bank," he said, adding, "This is the kind of stuff you see *on 60 Minutes*. What is ridiculous is that my primary business is treating adolescents who get involved with alcohol and drug abuse. I come from humble beginnings. I was raised by my grandparents, and we were dirt poor. I've worked for everything I have and I did it legally. I hope the horrid allegations don't make my children suffer."

A month later, having denied all the legal claims from Ricci's lawsuit, the bank, on the advice of new counsel, put the name, Joseph J. Ricci, through a Nexis Lexis computer that taps into national court and newspapers records. It was through this check they learned the mistake. A different Joseph Ricci of Duxbury, Massachusetts had been indicted for being an organized crime strongman, although these charges against him were later dismissed.

Perhaps there had been a simple case of mistaken identity, but it was discovered too late. The damage was done. The conflict was going to be decided in court.

## **Chapter Seven: Conspiracies abound**

In 1982 two former residents of Elan filed complaints charging physical and emotional abuse. The Maine Bureau of Mental Health and Retardation notified Ricci they were initiating an investigation. Owen Colomb, the attorney general's office investigator, who helped spawn the Mafia allegations, was dispatched to conduct the investigation. Ricci told everyone he was 'under siege.' He was convinced that the governor and attorney general were in collusion with the bank and Ival Cianchette, owner of a construction company, to acquire his land at Scarborough Downs to build an ethanol plant. He insisted the attorney general's office had instigated the complaint by the former Elan residents. Although Elan was found not guilty of abuse, Colomb's participation in the probe confirmed Ricci's belief that the attorney general's office was out to get him.

Ricci claimed his businesses lost millions of dollars in potential revenue because people thought he was a member of the Mafia. He said he was forced to sell his antiques and a gold coin collection. He depicted his friend Linda Smeaton, the woman he met shortly after his divorce who moved into his home on Blackstrap Road, crying as the items were carted away. He talked about an arrangement he had with a car dealer to give his eighty percent of the book value for his Mercedes, if he needed immediate cash to survive.

Yet during this time he continued to draw a \$250 annual salary, spent \$121,000 on racehorses, and \$253,000 on gambling. His gold Rolex was still on his wrist, and his Bentley housed in his garage. Subsequent trial documents certified he sold less than \$2,000 worth of antiques.

On October 30, 1982, Ricci's father, Bamboo, died at the age of 61. He had cancer and had been confined to a hospital a few miles from the state-run senior citizen apartment building in Port Chester where he lived. He had a one-day wake at Pape's Funeral Home, a small building located in a rundown section of Mamaroneck where he was laid out in a \$395 pine casket. Ricci didn't go to the wake or the funeral but was listed on Pape's records as the person responsible for the bill.

Joe Ricci had his own sons for visits two weekends a month in 1982 and 1983. He stated in court papers, and later told reporters, he feared for his family's

safety during this time, thinking the relatives of Joey Napolitano might believe that he really was a member of the Mafia, and try to seek revenge. He beefed up the private security force guarding his house on Blackstrap Road. Yet his ex-wife Sherry and his young sons, then ages six and seven, lived five miles away without any protection.

Ricci's ex-wife Sherry said her sons would return from visits with their father with terrible stories. One time both boys were in the car when Ricci told them to jump out of the vehicle and dive into the bushes. He said he was certain there was a bomb ready to explode. Another time at a Chinese restaurant Ricci pointed out a person seated a few booths away. "See that man over there," he whispered. "He's following us."

On December 17, 1983 the clubhouse at Scarborough Downs burned to the ground in a suspicious fire that Ricci claimed was arson.

This occurred exactly two years from the December 17, 1981 allegation he was involved with the Mafia. Firefighters on a frigid night had trouble controlling the blaze because the private fire hydrants maintained by the track were empty. (Nine years earlier, the fire at Elan also occurred on a frigid night and frozen hoses hampered extinguishment of the fire.) The phone at the track was not working so the security guard on duty had to drive ten minutes to the Scarborough Fire Department to report the blaze.

Ricci told anyone who would listen that the fire at his track was arson perpetrated by the same people who wanted to put him out of business. But research into the fire's investigative file, and surrounding circumstances reveals a more complex tale involving stolen confidential Elan files, cash payoffs, and meetings between an ex-con explosives' expert and Ricci less than three months before.

Much of this intrigue centers around, Anthony "Toy" Fischer, whom Ricci and Davidson's attorney Richard Poulos fingered as the arsonist in a June 11, 1984, letter sent to Arthur Stilphen, Maine's Commissioner of Public Safety. Poulos wrote that there were events occurring about the time of the fire that raised "grave concerns of foul play."

Despite the detailed narrative of Poulos's letter to the commissioner, he omitted

the fact that Joe Ricci had arranged a meeting with Fischer on September 28, 1983. This meeting is substantiated in a police interview with Fischer at Maine State Police Barracks where, prior to the fire, Fischer detailed his relationship with Ricci. This meeting between Ricci and Fischer is also documented by a telephone call to Portland Police headquarters Ricci made two days later, claiming he wanted to put the meeting ‘on the record’ since he feared being set-up by Fischer.

On January 7, 1985 two detectives, Peter Herring and Maurice Ouellette interviewed Anthony Fischer regarding a file about Elan, which was taken from the Portland Office of Human Services in March of 1983. At the time Elan was in the midst of an investigation and facing an impending license renewal. During this interview Fischer admits to having acted as a courier, picking up the file from an unnamed person at the human services office and transporting it to a law office in Portland for copying.

Fischer told investigators he was given the job by a private investigator he knew who told him to go to the state licensing office and tell a clerk he was there to pick up the file for him. Fischer testified the person at the office had been expecting him because the thick file had already been pulled out and was sitting on the man’s desk. A man described in his 40s with brownish grey hair and glasses handed it to him and told him to make sure he got it back.

Fischer stated that he skimmed the file on route to the attorney’s office and noted it contained information concerning a complaint about Elan from a member of the Shaker Community in Poland Spring along with a report about abuse from the Rhode Island Child Advocate’s Office.

When Fischer arrived at the attorney’s office, he said that the law office receptionist was also expecting him. An attorney, who called Joe Ricci on the phone, arranged the meeting he had with Ricci at the Sonesta Hotel that evening.

The following transcripts of Fischer’s meeting with the detectives describe his meeting with Joe Ricci. Some sentences were censored by Maine State Police in the report provided to me.

**Fischer:** “*He pulled up and he was in a Mercedes two seat coupe, real expensive job...He got out right, and I had told —— if I was going to meet with*

*Ricci I wanted to do it alone, right, that you know the guy makes me nervous, you hear things...Then we sat down, and we were talking back and forth right and he mentioned to me that the governor wanted his Scarborough Downs to build an ethanol plant on because his Downs has an exit right off from the highway, some stupid silly bogus thing like that. He told me that the State Police were investigating him for the arson of some restaurant, and he told me something that kind of made my hair rise a little bit. He told me that —— had told him that I had you know, done some shit on the side for the FBI when I was with—— I asked him how he knew that. He told me——— was on his payroll...So you know I figured here's a person you know who's got some inroads to know that type of shit. He asked me all about——you know. And subsequently of course the conversation I told him about the book that me and —— had written on you know the bombings... I told him I had helped write that book. Somewhere in the course of that conversation we were talking about, you know, fires and how to do it and get away with and all this, that and the other. He told me he was picking my brains because he had an idea, and at the end of the conversation he offered me a job, head of security at Scarborough Downs. I told him I'd think about it. He gave me a ride home to Raymond that night. Then the next time I saw him was when he come up to the house terrorizing, all pissed off that the file was never delivered back to the Department of Human Services."*

**Detective Herring:** "Now at this particular time that you're meeting with him at the Sonesta, you have the file, don't you?"

**Fischer:** "Ya"

**Detective Herring:** "Because you've just been to——office, and you had the file. Now you were also paid?"

**Fischer:** "No, I was paid for it by a woman in a blue car."

**Detective Herring:** "Were you paid for it before or after you met with Ricci?"

**Fischer:** "Before. I dropped the file off before lunch, because I remember I used the ——at lunch."

**Detective Herring:** "Let's back up a bit a little. Once the arrangements were made for you to meet with Ricci and there was some discussion about you

*getting paid. Tell me about that.”*

**Fischer:** “*I told —— that I was suppose to get paid and he wrote down a telephone number, and I called that number.*”

**Detective Herring:** “*Who answered?*”

**Fischer:** “*Elan Four, I was told to sit tight. A Plymouth Station wagon pulled up, this woman honked the horn, I went over. She had dark hair, real cute real good-looking doll. I got in the car; she ran me down to the Franklin Street Arterial, and paid me one hundred and fifty bucks, and I got out of the car and left... so the file now is sitting at ——house because I took the file up to —— and dropped it off there before I made the call.*”

**Detective Herring:** “*Before you called her?*”

**Fischer:** “*Because see I was supposed to take the file from — and run it back to Department of Human Services, and for some reason I don’t remember, I think I got side tracked. It’s one of those bogus little deals where they paid me too quick and I went, I was too busy enjoying the 150 bucks that you know, because at that time I was so broke if I’d step on a nickel I could have told you if it was heads or tails, you know.... and I think I was just out spending the 150 bucks, and one thing led to another.... I was out in Raymond, no vehicle and subsequently it just stayed with him.*”

**Detective Herring :** “Now at the Sonesta Hotel was the file discussed?”

**Fischer:** “*No, no*”

**Detective Herring:** “*Did he bring it up, or you bring it up, either one of you?*”

**Fischer:** “*I think he thanked me for it. I think. I think if I recall he thanked me. He was more interested in the bombs... Because I remember I explained to him now and I can’t recall whether he asked me that or whether he, somehow in the course of the conversation it came up about fires.*”

**Detective Herring:** *Uhhuh.*

**Fischer:** “*I told him the old battery trick. You take a car battery; you pour the*

*car battery into a pan. You bring that to a boil until you see like a thick white cloud forming.... You pour it off, you run it outside, you hold your breath because if you breathe that cloud, you're dead. Run it outside, let it all cool down, pour off the liquid and all along the bottom of the pan you'll find little glass chips..."*

**Detective Herring:** "Uhhuh"

**Fischer:** "You take a pair of tweezers, you break those chips off if you want like a five minute deal right, you throw them into a prophylactic, if you want a half, anywhere from twenty minutes to a half hour, you throw them into a balloon, throw a rock or a penny into it for weight... OK you take a Styrofoam container, you fill that full of gasoline, right, you drop that in, the gas seeps through the rubber, hits the condensed sulfuric acid, reaches the kindling point and vavoom! And there's absolutely nothing there to trace.... "

**Detective Herring:** "Uhhuh"

**Fischer:** "Because Styrofoam is a petroleum product, it burns. You know, and all you have is one section of an area scorched. And I remember I explained that in detail to him. He took some notes on a napkin.' "

**Detective Herring:** "Did he make any attempt to try to hire you to do anything for him?"

**Fischer:** "No, he offered me a job, director of security for Scarborough Downs, and I told him I'd have to think about it. I told my wife about it, and she said no."

**Detective Herring:** "So his main interest in talking to you that day was what? Learning about bombs or was it learning about security?"

**Fischer:** "Ya, he asked me a lot about security because you know, he told me that ——had told him I had given some to the FBI, During that whole thing he was saying the State Police are always investigating him, that he's real worried about his employees. He wanted to know what I knew about electronic devices; you know he was telling me his place is always bugged. I told him about West Star, which is a corporation where you know through the mail you can buy the

*little debugging devices to tell if your house is bugged and stuff like that. We talked about the stun gun too.”*

**Detective Herring:** “Uhhuh.”

**Fischer:** “He was saying something about getting one because he had a lock down facility at Poland Spring where, you know, it’s like a little jail. Guards walk around with pool cues and stuff, and he said that it would be more humane to stun them than beat them with a pool cue. That was toward the end of the conversation. After that I really didn’t appreciate the guy because I’d been on the receiving end of programs like that.”

**Detective Herring:** “So when you left you took the file home?”

**Fischer:** “No I didn’t. I didn’t take the file home to Raymond. The file stayed at \_\_\_\_\_ I don’t think \_\_\_\_\_ knew what it was. He’s just a friend of mine who lives up on Munjoy Hill. It was just a thing where I’d been visiting him and left it in his car and because Ricci gave me a ride home to Raymond right, and nothing was mentioned about the file or anything. I think Ricci was under the impression I had already run the file back to the Department of Human Services.... I think he was under that impression the file was up at \_\_\_\_\_ and to be honest with you I really can’t recall why I left it. It wound up just getting left there.”

Fischer recalls that the next time he saw Joe Ricci was weeks later when he appeared on his door at 1:30 a.m. He describes this scene to Detective Herring:

**Fischer:** “We were in bed. My wife said someone was pounding on the door, right. So, I yelled out, who is it, right. He answered, ‘It’s Joe Ricci, open up.’ He comes in, wearing a long brown leather coat. I looked passed him and I could see a car. I said ‘who’s in the car?’ And he goes ‘Just some people to make sure I come out.’

*I could smell he had been doing some serious drinking, right, so he came in, and started yelling and swearing ‘fucking asshole, you know you stabbed me in the back, you little cocksucker, that file, you know where’s that file? I want it now.’*

*That file was right there in my house, but I’d be damned if I was going to give it*

*to him. Cuz you know like I say all the tourists had left and here I am sitting on Panther Pond. I figured you know this guy could do me in, and you guys wouldn't find me for four days, right. So I told him a friend of mine had it, or maybe that I destroyed it. I think I told him I destroyed it, but I was nervous.. Because I told him I could get in some really hot shit, right, over that file.. And I remember my wife got up, and she was standing in the doorway, and she was just scared shitless, because at one point he said, "Well let me tell you something you little bastard, you don't know everything that's going on... because if you did, you'd be floating; they'd find you floating in Back Bay... Then he noticed the trophies on my mantle, right. I'm the brown belt New Hampshire champion."*

**Detective Herring:** “Really?”

**Fischer:** “*Ya, I'm heavily into the arts, I started throwing some of my own around and told him you know, 'if you don't calm down, you come into my home, you upset my wife, I'm going to bust every bone in your face, right'. That's when he said 'I'm carrying it.' And my wife got all upset that we were going to be shot. Then he calmed down once I started threatening him right back. He went and got a woman out of the car. There wasn't a bunch of people out there to make sure that he came out. All there was a woman. My wife could probably tell you her name; she's got a memory like that. But he introduced her as the —— of Elan, right. And they sat down, and they shot the shit for a while, and that was the end of it. Well it was that same night, my wife said 'we're moving. '''*

Fischer’s interview with Detective Herring later revealed he brought the human service file to the attorney general’s office a couple of months later, after the fire at Scarborough Downs. This action was apparently prompted by other incidents that occurred after Joe Ricci’s alleged early morning appearance at Fischer’s home. He told Detective Herring and Ouellette about being beaten up in broad daylight outside the post office in Raymond by two men who ambushed him and beat him badly enough that he ended up in the hospital with a concussion.

A few months after Fischer was beaten up, the fire destroyed the clubhouse at Scarborough Downs. Private investigators working for the track’s insurance company contacted Fischer. Fischer also learned that Joe Ricci’s private investigators had contacted his half-brother to help implicate him for arson.

The investigations into the fire at Scarborough Downs lasted for many months. Not only did the state fire marshal's office investigate the fire, but so did the Mission Insurance Company whose investigators even placed a call to Joe's ex-wife to ask if she thought he was capable of setting fire to his own track. (She declined to speculate about anything her ex-husband would do.)

After learning he was a suspect Ricci began telling everyone that he thought that something as preposterous as that might occur. He said that is why just weeks before the fire he rewrote his track's insurance policy for 'replacement value only.'

The clubhouse, valued by the town of Scarborough at \$93,000 in 1979, was 'replaced' five years later for a cost of \$2.2 million. The fire at Scarborough Downs allowed Ricci to significantly upgrade his facility just as the fire at Elan in Sebago helped Joe Ricci expand his businesses.

By the spring of 1984 Ricci's suit against Depositors, then known as Key Bank, was caught in a legal limbo. Many motions and a deluge of depositions stalled progress. The bank filed countersuits against the FBI and state investigators for providing the erroneous information, and matters were getting more complex. Ricci fired his attorney Popeo. Then he became angry at his new attorneys, Joe Reeder from Washington D.C. and Daniel Lilly, Richard Poulos, and John Campbell from Portland, Maine for not being proactive.

He told everyone he was an innocent victim of a massive conspiracy to destroy his livelihood.

## **PART II**

## Chapter Eight: Cosmic Convergence

I had never been to a racetrack, not even bet on a horse at a country fair before I got the call that frosty morning in March of 1984. A woman who identified herself as Martha Amesbury told me she liked my resume. Scarborough Downs was opening in six weeks, and it needed someone to run the in-house advertising department.

She asked me to come to the track the next day to meet Joe Ricci. Had I sent my resume to a racetrack? My previous experience had been primarily in advertising and marketing for higher education, historic preservation, and healthcare. This certainly was a switch. Images of Edward G. Robinson, stogie cigars, and of course the mafia, came to mind. I felt a wave of apprehension - and a ripple of excitement.

Route One in Scarborough Maine is a congested two-lane highway. It is the main thoroughfare for summer tourists heading to cottages on Pine Point or Old Orchard Beach. Some of the more moneyed folk also travel this route to their elaborate homes on Prouts Neck. Dotted with industrial parks, it is a premium location for developers, with its proximity to the city of Portland, ten miles away.

Scarborough Downs has a half-mile private road off this route leading to its vast parking lot. Situated on five hundred acres, it is one of the last large undeveloped tracts of land north of Boston. It even has its own seasonal exit off the Maine Turnpike I-95.

That road to the racetrack was wet with melting snow, and full of potholes the day I navigated my small car in the direction of the glass grandstand, which looked like an ugly red and white monster surrounded by asphalt. Everything inside was painted a patriotic red, white, or blue. Trash barrels were painted all three colors. Cheap wood paneling covered some walls in the cavernous space. I walked carefully in my high heeled boots, weaving my way around what appeared to be empty flea market tables. Then I spotted a door behind the betting line, which I had been told would be the office.

The smoke coming from two small rooms assaulted my eyes and nose. The first

room, which I later learned was used as the admissions and program office during the racing season, had desks, side by side facing the same direction. Two burly men were talking on the phone. Straight ahead there was another, smaller room with its door open. A woman, also on the phone, sat behind another desk. No one stirred when I entered, so I waited, feeling oddly out of place, dressed in a tailored brown wool suit and white silk shirt, primly carrying my portfolio. Suddenly everyone looked up, all eyes focusing above me.

“Hi Joe,” the voices rose in surprising unison, a mixture of enthusiasm and anxiety.

“How ya doin’ guys. We got to get the heat cranking in here. John, why don’t you go find out why it’s so cold. You must be Maura. I’m Joe,” he said without stopping for a breath. “This place is crazy, I apologize for the mess,” he continued, leading the way to the inner office where the woman at the desk was still on the phone. Ricci was taller than I imagined, younger too, and friendlier than I anticipated.

“I used to have a suite of executive offices, but my clubhouse burned down in December, so we’re going against the wind,” he announced. “Thanks for coming today. I guess Martha’s told you that we need someone good this year to do advertising.”

I was struck by his conversational, almost confidential tone. There was none of the initial stiffness of other interviews. But instinctively I felt on guard, that big tests lay ahead.

Martha, the woman behind the desk, got off the phone and Ricci closed the door, while simultaneously greeting her. She was about 30 years old, plain with a thin face and short brown hair, casually dressed in turtleneck and slacks. She appeared cordial, yet her eyes were strangely opaque.

“Running a racetrack is no picnic,” Ricci explained. “You’ve got all types of people who go here, and who work here. Some have one tooth in their head, others drive BMWs, but you’ve got to appease them all.”

He was standing, looking like an actor, leaning against the door as he spoke, hands in his pockets.

“Joe, sit here,” Martha interrupted as she got out from behind the desk and sat on a bench beside it. “No, No I can’t sit down,” he impatiently responded. Then, watching me about to take my place on a metal chair beside Martha, directed me. “You sit at the desk,” he gestured benevolently with a swish of his hand. “I want you to be comfortable.” I didn’t protest, attempting to assume the unusual position of interviewing for a job sitting in an executive office chair, behind a large desk, while the owner of the company stood standing, and the corporate controller sat shivering on a bench in front of me.

That ‘interview’ as I remember it, lasted about two hours with Joe Ricci sweeping the conversational canvas with big bold exclamations and short simple statements. Occasionally he would look to Martha for confirmation of some factual point. Contrary to most job interviews, my performance didn’t seem to be the main attraction. I intuitively sensed that being a viable member of this man’s audience was the actual role for which I was auditioning, that my responses to him were more important than anything else.

In one instance noticing that Martha appeared cold, he stripped off the white silk scarf, which hung loosely around his neck, and placed it on her legs. She appeared charmed, but uncomfortable, and my smile of amusement at his act seem to cheer him on. He seemed surprised, I thought, by my ability to remain unfettered in his midst. Is this a test? I wondered as I tried to remain calm and conversational.

Frankly, I found Ricci rather refreshing, after spending hours earlier in the week being interviewed by a five-member search committee with questions from some interview technique textbook. He was charming, not the usual CEO, or even close. He seemed to genuinely enjoy running the racetrack and described in detail ads he thought up in the past. He said he loved advertising and never begrudging spending hundreds of thousands of dollars a year on it.

I gestured towards my portfolio, anxious to demonstrate my own capabilities. He acted impressed as I turned the pages and gave my presentation about having diversified skills as a journalist and advertising professional, my degrees in communication. I wanted to convey I was capable of the kooky creative he seemed to enjoy yet had enough good taste and judgment to remember the bottom line, and work for it.

Whether I took the job at Scarborough Downs because of or despite that unusual interview doesn't matter now. It was, in hindsight, inevitable considering the combination of economic necessities and career considerations I was facing

Three months earlier my husband had fallen down a flight of stairs at work. My father, a writer, had died suddenly the year before, and I had taken time from my advertising and marketing work to catalogue his manuscripts. Consequently, I had no full-time clients, and after my husband's injury, we had no income.

Before the call from Scarborough Downs, I had been called back for a second interview for the director of corporate relations post with the Maine Development Foundation located in the state's capital of Augusta. That post involved raising money by securing incorporators for the foundation. It required business breakfasts, lunches, and after-hours events. I wasn't sure I could handle all that with an injured husband, and a six-year-old son, along with the three-hour round-trip commute to Augusta from my home.

Scarborough Downs was only thirty-five minutes away and offered opportunity for creativity with a six figure-advertising budget.

I didn't expect Joe Ricci to offer me the position on the spot because Martha had said other candidates were coming later in the week. I was surprised by my own response when Joe Ricci looked at me with a smile and asked, "Do you want the job? It's yours for the asking."

"I'll give it a shot," I said. "We'll see what happens, win, place or show."

I should have known more about Joe Ricci than I did during that afternoon in March of 1984. I knew the track's clubhouse burned down the previous December. I also remembered months earlier passing by my television and being struck by the image I'd seen on the news. A man was shouting about the attorney general and the governor trying to put him out of business. I couldn't comprehend what he was talking about, only that he was very angry. "That man desperately needs public relations," I remarked to my husband. Only much later did I realize that was my first look at Joe Ricci.

Scarborough Downs' racing season ran April through September. Every March more than two hundred and fifty employees were hired to work in administration, the mutual line, landscaping and parking, making the racetrack the largest seasonal employer in the state. That year the club-house fire that destroyed the track's executive offices, the Downs Club Restaurant, and an upscale betting area complicated the usual pre-season preparations. All that remained was the dilapidated red, white, and blue grandstand. Most fans and former employees were betting it would be a terrible season. They felt 'high rollers' accustomed to being pampered in the clubhouse would never settle for mosquito-ridden bleachers.

Each day closer to the season opening brought more people and increased activity. Some regulars, such as the track announcer Lloyd Johnson, and mutuel manager Bob Leighton, had been there for years, returning every spring like the swallows at Capistrano.

I had six weeks to conceptualize a seasonal ad campaign for print and radio, layout the print ads, produce the broadcast spots, and make all the media buys. Working fourteen-hour days I felt I could make the production deadlines and get ads on the airwaves by mid-April. But my confidence was tested when I found out Ricci also wanted me to plan the track's first ever 'opening day extravaganza.'

My office, in a red storage shed across from the grandstand, was behind the reception area, which led to another room. The day an expensive oak desk was delivered, I was told that room would be occupied by Ricci's friend, Linda, who handled personnel scheduling and payroll for the mutuel cashiers.

About four weeks before the track opened, Lloyd Johnson, a short wiry man with poor false teeth and dark rimmed glasses appeared with cigarette and coffee cup, smiling a bit cynically at all the chaos. He poked his head in my office. "This is a crazy place," he warned, regarding me as though I had been a naive in-law who married into a clan of lunatics. He said he'd been at the track since 1979, the year Joe Ricci purchased Scarborough Downs. He'd called the races, done a handicapping column for the newspaper and wrote articles for the back of the daily racing program. He said he had even been general manager for a season or two. He told me "I'm one of the oldest employees because I mind my own business up in the crow's nest (the roof of the grandstand, where he viewed and

called races) and I'm out of Joe's way when he gets into one of his moods."

The office environment at the track was organized chaos. The only one who seemed to have any authority was Joe Ricci, but he made only sporadic appearances. I had spoken with him a half a dozen times during my first weeks on the job. Suddenly he would be standing in a doorway or poke his head through a door enroute somewhere. His gold Mercedes SL sports coupe would often be parked on the lot, but there would be no sign of him. One time, he breezed in and saw me writing ad copy. He exclaimed with finger pointed toward my left hand. "I didn't know you were married. How long?" "Nine years," I said. ' "I was married for nine years too, home every night, the whole bit but it became a noose around my neck, and she kept pulling it tighter and tighter." Without another word he turned and walked away.

It wasn't too long before I had a handle on Ricci's style of getting business done, and realized I'd need to abandon some of my professional expectations to survive. Staff meetings were called with little notice. Attendance was expected. Other appointments were not an excuse. Then after people quickly altered their schedules for the appointed time, Ricci would appear an hour or two late, or not at all.

John Fortin was employed off season doing odd jobs around the track and taking care of the snack bar at the weekend flea market held every Sunday until racing resumed. He was a genial, easygoing guy. I'd chatted with him, and Debra Therrien around the office in those first weeks in March. Debra had been handling the two hundred flea market vendors, scheduling space, and processing their payments. I'd seen both of them do everything from ordering racing gear and food to fixing pipes, and scheduling job applicants for interviews. They held the place together during the winter, along with the Scarborough Downs controller Don Nason who approved purchase orders and paid bills.

Yet none of them acted on their own. Every action was initiated by an order from the other end of the phone. These instructions were from either Joe Ricci or Martha Amesbury who had their offices at Elan in Poland Spring, about twenty miles from the track. I knew nothing about Elan then, except that it was therapeutic school Joe Ricci ran.

I met Ricci's business partner, Dr. Gerald Davidson, when he wanted to use the

phone in my office one day. Davidson, in his sixties, was at least six inches shorter than Ricci, balding and stocky. He spoke in careful phrases and reminded me of someone's academic uncle. How odd, I thought when he introduced himself to me as "Joe's partner." I couldn't even imagine the two carrying on a conversation.

I had been on the job about a month before meeting Dr. Davidson. I didn't see him again until he wanted to talk about Joe Ricci for this book. I wondered what it was that joined these two men, what common ground they shared.

## Chapter Nine: Stage Set

I had lunch with a TV salesperson, Bob Benson one afternoon in April. Benson was an aggressive salesman, in his forties, fit and tan. We ate at the Snow Squall restaurant near a marina in South Portland. He talked candidly about Scarborough Downs, which was one of his major advertising accounts. He said he liked my predecessor, “But he drove her crazy,” he confided. ‘He’ was obviously Joe, and I was curious. “The last time I saw him,” he continued, “was one night out near the entrance of the track, armed with a shotgun. He was convinced someone was trying to take over the place, and then use the Down’s land for an ethanol plant. God is he intense!”

“You’re one of the people Joe wants at his house in half an hour,” John Fortin informed me as I walked in the door from the revealing lunch with Bob Benson. “Oh,” I said feeling put out. I had at least a dozen phone calls to answer that afternoon.

“Just where does Joe live?”

“In Falmouth,” he said looking tense. “But you’ll never find the place on your own. Debra and I are going too. You can follow us in your car, but we must leave now,” he insisted as if the room would explode if we didn’t depart that second.

It was about a half hour drive north down the Maine turnpike, followed by a series of twists and turns up a treacherous mountain road to the stonewall that marked the entrance to Ricci’s home, a stately residence not visible from the street. Just before the house were two small buildings, a garage, and a guard shed where a man permitted our passage.

Two dogs, huge rottweilers, started barking loudly as we drove in. They lunged forward at the car wheels. I quickly navigated my way to a parking space and turned off the engine. Outside the door, the dogs still barked, and I was squeamish about relinquishing the safety of my car.

John and Debra emerged from their vehicle and were diverting the dog’s attention. I made it to the front entrance hall out of breath. A woman in her

fifties opened the door “I’m Anne the housekeeper,” she announced, “The meeting is in the dining room to the left,” she said pointing across the marble foyer, decorated with dark antiques, and a bowl of exotic flowers. I spotted Ricci, dressed in jeans and a sweatshirt, leaning on an ornate mantle, above a long table where Debra and John had already joined about a half dozen others. Ricci stopped mid-sentence when I entered and smiled. “How ya doing’?” he asked cheerfully, but before I could answer he continued his discussion with Martha about transforming one of the bars in the grandstand to a restaurant. I found an empty spot and sat down.

A svelte blonde woman, impeccably groomed in designer clothes and model perfect makeup, emerged carrying two large goblets filled with a dark liquid that she placed in front of Debra and John. Others seem to already have drinks in various sized glasses.

“I’m Linda,” she said “Can I get you something to drink? We have soda, juice, Poland Spring water, wine.”

I soon understood the unwritten ritual of imbibing during meetings on Blackstrap Road. If an afternoon meeting lasted past 4 p.m., which they nearly always did, bottles of wine would be opened, with glasses refilled promptly by Linda Smeaton who moved into the house with Joe after his ex-wife Sherry moved out. Drinking turned the conversation into a rap session, with Ricci the focus of attention, sipping sake as he told stories. Often it wasn’t until after 6:30p.m. that people started leaving, always providing a suitable excuse for their exit, particularly if Ricci was still performing.

The mood was somber that afternoon on Blackstrap Road. I could feel the pressure in the room. Everyone sat tensely in their seats with notebooks open and pens perched ready to take down instructions. Martha, sitting near the head of the table where Ricci had obviously been sitting before he began to pace, was stone faced. Don Nason, the controller for Scarborough Downs sat upright, calculator and accounting sheets in front of him. Linda had assumed her position at the other head of the table opposite where Joe had been sitting. She was staring up at him with an expression I couldn’t determine. A simple stare, set like a mask.

There were three other people in the room. Bobby Leighton, in his fifties with a

head of bushy white hair, came across as sincere, but too eager to please, bobbing his head continually. That season was his twenty-ninth one at the Downs. Leighton had been there every summer since 1955, when Joe Ricci was only ten years old. Leighton had been a math teacher in the Portland public schools. He found the job at the Scarborough Downs to earn money during summer vacations.

I hadn't met the other two men who were both about thirty years old. One, seated directly to my left smiled and introduced himself as Eric. He had a good vibe and seemed enthusiastic. The other man was Ricci' lawyer, John Campbell, whose suitcoat, and tie set him apart from the others.

Joe Ricci had been silent for a minute while Martha was updating him with some cost estimates. He was pensive, and then interrupted her, addressing all of us at the table.

"You know guys, we're in deep shit. This season-if we don't do something quickly-we're going to take it in the neck." His voice rose and his speech became more rapid. "You've got to understand we're under siege. There are people who don't want us to succeed. They tried to burn the track down! It was just a miracle that on the night they picked, the wind was blowing in a different direction, and the grandstand was spared. We can't afford to let anything ride this year. We've got to give 100 percent effort. Otherwise, no one in this room is going to have a job in a few weeks. I've brought in Eric from Elan to be the new general manager out there," he said gesturing toward our section of the table.  
"And Maura is working on an opening day that'll blow people's minds."

He lightened up, as he instructed me to tell everyone what I had lined up. I recited a litany of activities, including a performance by the Children's Theater of Maine, face painting, and juggling. I emphasized the stunt air show with skydivers, a parade of antique autos, stilt walkers, clowns, and a high school marching band. I added that I was about to confirm an elephant and camel coming from Florida for rides. I also mentioned that I'd located a post horn and contacted the lead trumpet player for the Portland Symphony to perform the opening 'call to post,' dressed in morning coat, hat, and riding boots.

"Great, great!" Ricci said, seeming pacified. "How are your ads coming?"  
"Good," I responded hoping he wouldn't ask too many specifics.

During our job interview I had asked him about my having creative control of ads with the final product approved by him. He told me he left competent people alone. “It’s when people screw up, that I step in and fix the mess,” he said.

“I’ve got a media blitz prepared and am targeting spots to be on TV and radio by the third week in April,” I volunteered. “I had lunch today with someone from WGME-TV and gave him my media buy.

“You know what?” Ricci suddenly interrupted, his face suddenly taking on a tougher look.

“I’m seriously considering not putting any ads on TV this season. The media in this state is a joke. They’ve done nothing to help me, just made me look foolish on the news. Why should I give them anything? How about if we take what we’d spend on TV, and use it for radio? That’ll fix them, not one good story about my lawsuit, my credit’s ruined, my reputation too. I’ve lost my children because they think their father kills people for a living. And it’s not news? Yeah. You call each of the stations and tell them that Mr. Ricci has decided not to do anymore business with them.

All eyes in the room were focused on me, eager to hear my response. I knew only snatches about the lawsuit he had against a bank that cut off his line of credit. There was an article from the April issue of *Venture* magazine someone had dropped it off at the track. I made a copy that morning and planned to read it so I could comprehend what was going on. But I still knew very little about Joe Ricci or his lawsuits. I decided just to articulate what I thought:

“Well, it seems to me this year of all year’s we need to utilize all the media outlets we have to compensate for the loss of business from the clubhouse. To exclude television, a major part of our advertising budget, could be suicide. Why not instead use the fact that we are a major advertiser as clout, a means to gain access to the airwaves? I worked at a TV station in Boston, and the assignment director there was overwhelmed with just filling the nightly news slots. Stories had to be packaged and handed to him. I think we need to get the facts out about your case and show them how newsworthy it is. I think abandoning TV is going to hurt us more than anything. Why not work on a mutually beneficial relationship? I can help with that.”

My face was flushed. I felt the stunned silence around the table but kept my eyes on Ricci. I realized nobody ever said more than a sentence or two to him without stopping to see how he was reacting. Opinions would be couched in disclaimers. Employees would start, stop, and hesitate, waiting for him to jump in. I had passionately forged ahead, oblivious to how he was receiving my message until I finished.

Joe Ricci stared at me, his eyes without expression “You know what?” he announced in a monotone, “You’ll go far in this company.” Then he changed the subject, and never mentioned not advertising on TV again.

xxx

Eric Moynihan, the new general manager at Scarborough Downs was chosen for the job in 1984 because he had taught at Elan for three years. A psychology major in college, he understood Ricci’s mood swings, and the frustration about his bank case. He had the ability to know enough to sit silently when Ricci was on a rampage and laugh with him when he was in a good mood, though he admittedly didn’t get to know him very well while he was at Elan. Being in education his activities were often separate from the rest of the ‘therapy’ program, and he had only recently come to Ricci’s attention for preparing Elan’s licensing application for the state board of education.

Eric had been attending graduate school nights at the University of Southern Maine studying for his master’s degree in secondary education administration. He hoped to be a high school principal and was getting all As in his courses. He had sent Ricci a memo only a month earlier expressing his desire to become certified as a secondary school administrator since none of Elan’s personnel at Pinehenge School had certification. It was a deficiency the state-licensing people had mentioned in their review of the school’s application.

But then he was called into a meeting with Ricci and Martha, and told he was going to be the new general manager at Scarborough Downs. Nobody ever discussed this dramatic career shift with him. It was just assumed he’d take the racetrack job, which raised his salary from \$18,000 to \$25,000. Married with three young children, this boost in income seemed like a Godsend, something he couldn’t refuse. Graduate school was put on hold.

During April Eric and other operating officials moved into the red shed. Personnel had been hired, fresh paint applied, food ordered. Racing offices were set up near the horse paddock in what was known as the back of the track, a usually muddy, barren area a quarter of a mile from the grandstand that the public never saw. These offices housed the racing arm of the down's operation, which included new race secretary Karl Janotta, his assistant Don Knapton, presiding judge Dick Herman, and a variety of support personnel required for each racing meet. It was common to have racing officials work several meets in different parts of the country over the year. It was a gypsy's existence, but the pay was generally good, and the sport in their blood.

The back of the track was busy with newly arriving trainers, drivers, and grooms. Horse trailers, bales of hay and other provisions for the tack shop were shipped in. The magnitude of the behind-the-scenes preparation for opening day was enormous. I began to view harness racing as a theatrical spectacle with a varied cast of characters. Joe Ricci, of course, was the producer, director, and star of the show.

## **Chapter Ten: Duck in a Raincoat**

Linda Smeaton began coming into the office during the second week in April to train the mutual cashiers. She told me she'd be working evenings from six to 10p.m., so meetings in her office wouldn't bother me because everyone who entered her office had to pass by my desk. Linda was cordial but aloof, always looking picture perfect in carefully coordinated designer clothing.

Elegant and model thin, she often wore her hair in a single blond braid that touched her lower back. Sometimes she wore her hair loose and flowing down past her shoulders. Occasionally Ricci would visit her in the office, and they'd close the door or talk in hushed voices. She always seemed on guard. I couldn't figure out if she was guarding her relationship with my boss or her own inner core, which she feared someone might penetrate.

We always exchanged simple pleasantries, until one day when I had been scheduled to show my first TV spots to the entire staff. A monitor had been set up in the shed's small conference room and Ricci was scheduled to arrive soon. Then Linda breezed by my desk smiling as if amused by something she knew that I did not.

"We're going to get to see your ads today?" she asked, still smiling. "I guess everybody is," I said, not certain I liked the idea of this peer screening before Ricci saw and approved them. "Well," she continued, "Joe is so nervous. I've never seen him like this. You know he's never done this before; she continued in a confidential, yet still amused tone. "Done what?" I asked, genuinely wondering what she was talking about. "Let someone have so much leeway, power. In the past he was always involved in the ads and had to personally approve them every step of the way. Last night he was saying, he hadn't even asked you what the ads were about, and they were already produced. He was walking around wringing his hands."

That was the first inclination I ever had that what Joe Ricci said he felt and really did feel could be contradictory. Just the day before, he had calmly told me on the phone that he had complete confidence in what I was going to produce, wasn't worried about it a bit.

Fortunately, the ads were a hit. I had opted for the weird approach rather than risk being boring. They were funny, a little bit of MTV, but also effective in getting the message across that opening day was for the whole family. Never before had Scarborough Downs targeted a family market. The ads also helped dispel some of the stereotyped seediness often associated with racetracks.

Whatever messages the public got, it worked. All previous opening day attendance records were broken, as more than five thousand people passed through the entrance gates.

Not knowing how to read a race crowd I was nervous from the time the gates opened, watching cars, trucks, and campers, creeping up the road. I kept hoping that as far as my eyes could see the long line would continue. I'd hired a local radio morning jock to narrate the parade that began at noon. Neither of us had ever been to a race or narrated a parade before. I outlined the names and organizations involved and "Cousin Bob" announced over the public address system their appearance on the track.

Then came a stunt pilot flying in his smoky Cessna, swooping, and swirling before two paratroopers jumped from another plane and landed on a bull's eye-Scarborough Downs logo placed on the infield. It was a superb spectacular, and it finished as scheduled at exactly 1p.m. in time for the national anthem and the official post parade.

There had been some complaints from racing officials, particularly Dick Herman, an austere ex-lawyer who served as presiding judge. He said show biz shenanigans would jeopardize the first day of the meet. But it did not happen. The drivers had the track in time for warm up, and on the other side of the grandstand, near the parking lot, children's activities, and elephant and camel rides commenced the same moment the bell rang for the opening of the mutuel line. Parents could bet with the peace of mind that their children were being entertained in special tents, guarded by security guards.

Learning the post positions of the personnel at the track was more complex than understanding those of the horses. Some employees were hired via applications; others were people Ricci had met in restaurants or bars. Often he'd walk up to a female store clerk or waitress and say, "You're pretty. I own Scarborough Downs. Would you like a job?" Others had more complex long-term

relationships with him, and these factors affected their performance, and their longevity.

On opening day, I made my way around the first level of the grandstand, past the row of pari-mutuel ticket sellers known as the main line. The barren building, I first entered three months earlier, was packed with people. The Winner's Circle Pub was rowdy with periodic screams of elation or anger. In the mezzanine more concessions and bars, one with a big screen blaring a baseball game. The new Seahorse Restaurant, also located at this level, looked surprisingly elegant with white tablecloths, and lots of greenery.

A suave looking man, maître 'd Dave Coombs, stood stately by its entrance. He was a high school teacher turned weight trainer and actor. In his late forties he had deep tan leathery skin, silver hair, and mustache. Stopping in the restaurant on the second floor of the grandstand I was astonished to see him dressed in tails, white pleated shirt, and red bow tie as if he'd been at the Ritz rather than the racetrack. He'd previously worked at The Downs Club Restaurant, was disturbed by the fire, but hopeful that some of the regulars, known for their generous tipping, would continue to show up.

On each side of the Seahorse Restaurant there were rows and rows of bleachers, which I scaled to the top, climbing an additional set of stairs up to the roof to visit Lloyd Johnson. He was calling a race when I arrived in the crow's nest for the next race. He greeted me with a nod, removing his headsets after letting out his final guttural "EEEEEEAH" just as the horses crossed the finish line.

"How's it goin down there?" he inquired with his style in which his lips didn't seem to move. "Is Joe ok? He drunk yet?" Johnson complimented me on the air show and remarked that it was an amazing opening day crowd. "Joe should be really pleased," he commented. "Unless he finds something that he enjoys being pissed off about."

Throughout the rest of the afternoon, I crisscrossed the grounds, eager to understand all aspects of the operation. I noted six concession stands staffed by teens outfitted in red or white Scarborough Downs crew shirts, three bars with cocktail waitresses dressed in provocative fashion, ticket takers, and mutuel sellers in pinstripes with garters on their arm. Horsemen and women were wearing jeans and muddy boots, and drivers dressed in their bright colored silks.

Eric Moynihan looked collegiate in his tweed suit coat and tie. There was diversity among the workers themselves, and between the workers, and the fans that came attired in everything from jeans to jodhpurs. In the Seahorse sat Linda Smeaton adorned in a flowing cream-colored dress, and wide brimmed straw hat, sipping champagne. Contrasting this scene was a beefy woman in the grandstand, wearing a man's white T-shirt, institutional checkered pants, and rubber tongs, swigging on a bottle of Bud.

I found Martha Amesbury at an ice cream concession. Dressed in beige chinos, and a soft sweater, she looked more relaxed than I'd seen her since March. She said the handle was good (total amount of money being bet) and that Ricci was pleased. She also informed me that there was a meeting for all the managers in the Winners Circle after the last race, and I should be there.

It wasn't until 6:30p.m. that the races ended. I was on the phone and arrived late for the meeting. When I walked self-consciously in the door, everyone erupted in applause. "Yaaaay Maura!" Martha yelled. "We broke our opening day record, and your stuff was great." Others nodded in unison. I took the only empty seat that happened to be next to Joe Ricci.

"You did a good job," he said. "But now we have to figure out how we're gonna succeed the next hundred and twenty-two days," he added with an anxious look. Eric was seated beside Joe and Martha, and we all ate pizza, discussing the day. Soon I made my excuses as most others had done, and left, wearily weaving my way across the parking lot. I'd worked sixteen days without a day off and wondered if I had to make it through the next one hundred and twenty-two days the same way.

When I got to my car, one of the few left in a parking lot that had been crowded hours earlier, I searched for my keys. Not in my pockets or my bag. Peering through the locked door in the darkness, I spotted the silver reflections, left in the ignition that morning. Embarrassed, I quietly walked to the security office and borrowed a coat hanger, hoping I could make my getaway before anyone learned of my plight. Ten minutes later, two security guards tried in vain to open the door. They had given up and suggested calling the state police for a special tool when Ricci appeared. "I know all about breaking into cars," he boasted. But he soon realized he couldn't open the door without damaging the lock. He also noted that the paint was already scratched from the 'coat hanger' approach by

security. “Let’s do it right,” he concluded, annoyed by the hack job that had already been done. “Go to your dealership tomorrow and get a replacement key.” I agreed and said I’d call my husband and have him pick me up.

“No, no,” he declared. “That will take too long, and you’re tired and anxious to get home. Take my car,” he said, handing me his gold keychain emblazoned with the initials J.R. “I’ll get a ride home from security. I live much closer than you.”

I protested, seeing his butterscotch-colored Mercedes sports coup glowing in the distance, the only other car then left on the lot, except for the bulky security vehicle.

“I insist,” he pressed. “Come on. I’ll show you how it works.”

Sitting in the leather passenger seat while he turned on the lights, demonstrated the wipers, directionals, adjusted the driver’s seat, pressed the electronic dial on the radio and got some music, I wondered if I was awake enough to drive, let alone be trusted with that special machine.

Just before I drove away Ricci ,whom I suspected had consumed quite a bit of alcohol, stood on the asphalt, looking solemn. He instructed me to take my time coming in the next morning.

“You did a good job today,” he said. “You’ve really got your shit together. Trust me, I’m a good judge of that, because I usually deal with people who don’t.”

## **Chapter Eleven: Just feeling aggressive**

Ricci was adept at involving both his employees and his troubled adolescents in his causes. Specific job descriptions meant nothing when he wanted a recruit for a particular project. He'd shuffle people around on his game board. Elan residents sometimes did maintenance work at the track, and lawn care at his house. Former Downs' Club chef, John Fortin, was willing to quit rather than cook institutional meals at Elan. But most stayed, losing their identities in a confusing Ricci reality.

He created a surrogate family in his band of employees and adolescents. It was clear he wanted them to spend more time in service to him than to their own parents, spouses, or children. He understood the need to sweeten the pot and could be extremely generous to loyal followers, offering exotic vacations, cash bonuses, cars, flowers, clothes, wine.

Settling into that first season at Scarborough Downs was a like trying to take a nap on a roller coaster. I'd get to the track about 8a.m. each day, and leave after 8p.m. every night, except for Saturdays, which I faithfully spent with my family. Yet even then it was impossible not to think about my job. My husband and son and I would be riding in the car, and I'd be on the radio, checking my advertising spots. If a guaranteed buy didn't air occur as I'd ordered we'd pull over, and I'd call the DJ on duty to ask what happened. It was more than devotion to my job, it was an obsession. This was fueled by Joe Ricci's bunker mentality, his belief that people were trying to put him out of business.

I vowed to be the quintessential team player then because I was still unaware of Ricci's personal vices, his extreme neediness, and his ruthless methods. I'm not sure whether my ignorance stemmed from naivete, or was the result of Ricci's careful cunning. But I began to discover the persona Joe Ricci presented to me was often different from how he acted with others. I started to see hints of his insidious personality.

Shortly after the track opened for the 1984 season, Tony Aliberti, harness racing columnist for the *Lewiston Sun Journal Sunday* wrote a column outlining many problems at Scarborough Downs. It was full of petty stuff such as the tuna sandwiches were too small, programs not up to par etc. Ricci was angry about

the piece, and Aliberti was immediately banned from the track. In response to Alerberti's negative article I decided to write a rebuttal, claiming it was unfair for him to judge the track harshly, especially that season as it was fighting back from the fire. Borrowing a sports analogy, I decided to appropriately title the piece: "*Interference on the rebound is a foul.*" I wrote the essay one morning and planned to show it to Ricci later.

When I left my office to go to lunch, I took the finished copy along for final reading, throwing my rough drafts, ripped, and wrinkled into the wastebasket under my desk. When I got back a half hour later Ricci and Martha were in my office. Martha was sitting in a side chair, while Ricci was seated behind my desk. In front of him was a roll of scotch tape, and about ten scraps of paper taped together to form a crude page. I realized it was the contents of my wastepaper basket.

Martha made a hasty exit, while Ricci made light of his violation of my privacy. He smiled and said he "liked to put together puzzles", and the one in front of him was quite interesting. Without missing a beat, I simply handed him the finished copy of the article. "This is much more reader-friendly than the 'trashy' version," I declared. I acted calm, yet I felt violated. I wondered why he had been checking my wastebasket. Did he think I had secrets to hide, or did he merely want to be omnipotent in his knowledge? Did he believe he had to monitor his employees so he could control them? I didn't know then that violation of privacy was a tenet at Elan.

Sharing an office space next to Linda Smeaton helped me learn more. One time he followed her into her office, agitated, and insulting after a meeting where Linda had been talking, and laughing more than usual. "Your laugh is too loud," he told her, "And that high pitched voice, I hate it." Other times he would send her flowers and bring her gifts.

One weekend Linda asked me whether I was going to be at my desk for a while. "Joe is bringing me jewelry and I want you to see it," she said. A half hour later Ricci went into Linda's office with a box. They both emerged in less than a minute showing me an expensive string of pearls, both oddly desperate to see if I liked them. I thought he must have asked Linda to make sure I was there when he brought them.

Ricci's relationship with Linda was a topic of speculation. I found the gossip understandable since they were the first couple of the track, a stunning pair, young, rich, and lavish in their lifestyle. I was surprised to learn Linda had been the manager at Portland's main office of Depositors Trust when she met Ricci and quit her job to spend more time with him. It was difficult to imagine her as a regular working woman.

On the Fourth of July there was a big matinee holiday race, called *The Dirigo Pace*. Two weeks earlier a saleswoman for a local radio station named Jennifer surprised me with a call informing me that Scarborough Downs had a \$5,000 credit for advertising. She and the manager of this small station had approached me about buying ad space. I had said I'd consider it, so I was taken back by the call informing me there was \$5,000 on account. Apparently, Ricci instructed her to tell me he had approved the cash commitment for the season. I learned that the money was to be paid to her station before the ads even ran, so she could get her commission.

Two weeks after receiving the full payment Jennifer called and asked, "How are you going to work this credit off?" We agreed upon a live broadcast of *The Dirigo Pace* with an on-air interview with Joe afterwards.

On July 4 Jennifer arrived in my office nervous and fidgety, combing and touching her hair. We met Ricci at the Seahorse Restaurant. He had a chilled bottle of champagne at the table waiting for us. He wanted to win us some money he said, declaring he was "rather good at picking winners" that season. "I'll get you both a ticket for the next race," he promised before returning with \$50 tickets. We talked about the race, and the broadcast, and headed to the crow's nest after our horses lost.

Jennifer asked prearranged questions about the track's horses, and upcoming special races and promotions. After she and Joe were off the air, they hugged each other gleefully. The three of us walked back to my office where Jennifer had left her things. Then he asked if I could excuse them for a few moments as they headed back out for a walk around the grounds. I sat down and began working on another project, stopping about five minutes later to go to the bathroom.

"Where did they go?" the receptionist asked when I passed by her desk. "He's

absolutely amazing,” she continued, “always hitting on a different one. You know what they say about him, don’t you?” she asked.

“No, what?” I asked. “That he goes out with all the cocktail waitresses, and even brings them home with him. Linda doesn’t even seem to mind.”

I went on to the restroom. When I emerged, the receptionist was red faced, her hands pulling at her hair. “Linda is in her office,” she whispered. “She heard me! I’ll probably be fired.”

It was impossible that Linda hadn’t heard the receptionist’s comments. I went to her office door and knocked, though it was already open. “You know,” I said, feeling genuinely bad for her, “when you’re a public figure like Joe is around here, you’re the unfortunate target of a lot of nasty comments. Linda smiled, thinly at first, and then beamed.

“You should have seen her face when I walked out and put something on her desk when you were in the bathroom. She knows I had to hear, and now she probably thinks she’ll be fired,” she said sounding amused and triumphant.

Ten minutes later Ricci returned and went into Linda’s office for a few minutes. Then he asked if he could speak to me outside. We walked over to the grandstand. “People can be so cruel,” he stated, shaking his head. “Linda heard the comments the receptionist made about me. Now Linda will want me to fire her,” he complained, before switching the subject to how he sounded on the radio broadcast.

The next day when I got into work the receptionist was gone. I never saw her again.

xxx

Joe’s sons Noah and Jason were eight and nine years old and came out to the track on weekends that first year. Ricci introduced them to me proudly, noting their strong biblical names before giving each a \$10 to spend at the tables. “Shop well,” he cautioned. “I want to see the wisdom of your purchases.” They often ate at the track on Sundays when racing was a matinee. Track security guards would drive them back home to their mother.

One Sunday afternoon I was sitting at my desk when I overheard Ricci's instructions to the not yet fired receptionist. "Please get Mrs. Ricci on the phone," he instructed her. "Let her know I'll have Jason and Noah back by 6p.m., and they've already had their dinner. Tell her I would've called her myself except none of the phones work. Still problems from the clubhouse fire. Tell her you've finally managed to get through." A minute later he left, and I heard the receptionist on the phone:

"Hello Mrs Ricci. Mr. Ricci wanted me to call you. He would've called himself, but we've had a terrible time with the phones here, still problems from the fire. I've been trying to get through for a long time. He says he'll have Jason and Noah back by 6p.m., and that they've already eaten."

I had been thinking about making a call and asked if the phones were working. "Of course, they're working," the receptionist answered. "That was just Joe having me lie to his ex-wife."

Later that summer Ricci planned a trip to Disneyworld in Florida with both his sons, only at the last minute just the younger Noah wanted to go. They were gone for a week, and every day Ricci called the track, complaining to Eric about the place. During this trip he reportedly went out and left eight-year-old Noah alone in the hotel room, instructing him to order anything he wanted from room service. One day he gave him \$50 and told him to spend it all on video games while he was gone. At the time Noah says he felt like a grown up, but upon reflection told his mother how scary it was for him.

Just as soon as I got to know some of the managers at the Downs they disappeared without warning. During the first two months Debra Therrien was promoted to assistant general manager. Ricci proudly told me that she was the first female assistant general manager of a racetrack in the country, He wanted me to write a press release announcing Eric's appointment and Debra's promotion, being certain to focus on her history making status. Yet the day after I wrote the release, Debra was gone. Even Eric didn't know why. "Joe just wanted her fired," he remarked, dumbfounded.

Eric found himself working night and day, often until the track closed at midnight. He was becoming a zombie. Finally, a split shift schedule had him working from 8a.m. until noon when he was supposed to return to his home a

half hour away. He was to be back by 4:30p.m. for evening racing and stay until midnight. Trouble was that he seldom got those four hours off in the middle of his fifteen-and-a-half-hour day. There would always be a crisis; a call from Joe, or another distraction to delay him. Often, he would barely have enough time to drive home and take a shower before returning to the track, with suit and tie for his nighttime duties. He fell asleep at the wheel twice, once careening off the road into the woods.

I was working one Sunday in July when Ricci suggested I take a walk with him. He was notorious for walking and talking with his employees, since it was difficult for him to sit. We walked over to the mutuel line at the grandstand and strolled behind the row of mutuel cashiers. I noticed tension in their backs. Everyone started standing erect, on guard. The year before Ricci fired four mutuel line bosses during a race, because he didn't think the track was handling enough money. In protest fourteen mutuel cashiers walked off the job. Ricci had refused to meet with them, giving his termination orders through mutuel manager Bobby Leighton.

Gardi Bodge, the wife of one of the fired four, and a mutuel cashier at the track for thirteen years, spoke out about the mistreatment of employees the next day to a sports columnist and was quoted in the *Portland Press Herald*. She explained that a cashier made only \$24 a night before taxes, and any mistakes had to be repaid. She cited an example where one evening she worked for nothing because she paid a wrong ticket. She observed that most of the tracks around the country had organized mutuel workers, yet at Scarborough Downs, employees had no security and should be treated better. Gardi's husband George learned he had been fired by reading it in the paper. He and his wife hadn't even been working the day everyone was axed. They'd gotten the day off to drive their son back to school in northern Maine. But because he was a line boss, he was guilty, even in absentia. He'd also worked at Scarborough Downs thirteen years, nine of them before Ricci even owned the track.

"You've been here how long now?" Joe asked that day as we walked behind the line. "Three, four months? You're doing well. I like your style. You're attractive. You dress well. How does a \$5,000 bonus sound? Work out something in writing, with payments over the rest of the season and I'll sign it."

Then he began talking about his Key Bank lawsuit, the frustration, and the need

for him to get publicity. He wanted more public outcry about what happened to him. He wanted my help.

"If the public could just realize how horribly I was treated, how my privacy and civil rights were violated, they'd be outraged. I really need someone to do an investigative piece, tying in the whole story about the corruption at the bank... Someone needs to expose how I was crucified. The whole thing is so rotten it makes Attila the Hun look good...I know you're busy now, but maybe you can make a few calls, drum up some publicity down the road."

A few days later I was invited to a meeting with Ricci's lawyer, John Campbell. He let me read some of the voluminous lawsuit depositions from the cast of characters in the Key Bank case being deposed that summer. Soon Ricci began calling me frequently to talk about his lawsuit, always ending every conversation with a charge for me to help expose his torment.

Somewhere in the middle of the summer Ricci disappeared, became incommunicado for at least two weeks. During that time Martha told me Ricci wanted more promotions, asked me to come up with a plan, and discuss it with him. Three appointments were scheduled, but he never showed up. Finally, I was summoned to his house one afternoon. When I arrived Ann, the housekeeper answered the door. She was apologetic. "Joe has been called away the last minute. He is terribly sorry he had to break the appointment with you. He told me to let you know he would call to reschedule. "Walking to my car, I looked back at the house, and saw Ricci peeking out the window.

Much later I learned about the incident with the Uzi that preceded his self-imposed exile. According to a former employee, Ricci threw a wild party in the Seahorse Restaurant one night after racing. "Alcohol was flowing. Joe kept disappearing in and out of the lady's room with different females, not for sex, but drugs. About 4 a.m., after many had left, he got his Uzi out and went to the parking lot where he aimed at the parking lights, shattering glass, sending red hot bullets through the corner of the grandstand. Joe said he wasn't mad, just feeling aggressive."

## Chapter Twelve: Politics as usual

The ability to size people up on a moment's notice, pinpointing their needs and vulnerabilities is the basic skill of any con man. In the movie "*The House of Games*," a seasoned street hustler always looked for what he called people's 'tells,' the ever so subtle mannerisms that told him where their weakness lay. Understanding people's basic motivations was also the foundation for Joe Ricci's actions.

During the summer of 1984 he fantasized about influencing the jury in his lawsuit against the bank. He talked about how he was going to parade his very Italian looking mother into the courtroom. "I'll have her dress all in black and pretend she can't speak a word of English," he joked. Ricci knew his victory depended upon his powers of persuasion, which were well honed. But he didn't want to wait for his testimony at the trial. He wanted advance publicity and depended upon me to get it.

He began calling me twice, sometimes three times a day. If I was out doing radio or television production, his secretary would track me down and tell me Joe was on the line. Sometimes production came to a sudden halt, camera crew sitting idle while Ricci kept me on the phone, relating the details of a late breaking deposition. I began getting calls at night, less than an hour after arriving home from work. He'd start each conversation saying "Sorry to bother you, but..."

Constant contact is an effective brainwashing technique. I thought about quitting, but economic circumstance wouldn't permit it and I'd just gotten a \$5,000 bonus with incremental payments. Ricci had apparently determined from some 'tell' that I needed money.

By the end of August *Maine Times* agreed to do an extensive cover story about Ricci's suit against the bank. Phyllis Austin, a seasoned reporter, conducted two interviews. I sat in on both. One was with at Ricci's house, the other with his lawyers Richard Poulos and John Campbell at their offices in Portland.

Austin, a petite, earthy sportswoman who had a no-nonsense style seemed impressed by Ricci's humor and his self-deprecating attitude. She told him he smoked and drank too much, observing that his ordeal might be killing him. She

arrived for her second interview carrying a list of outward-bound type expeditions. “I think these may help you maintain perspective,” she observed.

The paper planned two articles. One story would focus on the bank, and what it did to Ricci. The second, assigned to another reporter named Scott Allen, would detail the investigations Elan had undergone by the attorney general’s office.

Sitting in on an interview with Allen I was struck by Ricci’s portrayal of the state’s tactics against him and accepted everything Ricci told the reporter as the truth.

“I never filed a lawsuit or sued anyone before the bank started in on me,” he claimed, pacing around his dining room table, and dragging on his Merit cigarette, stopping intermittently to stare out the window overlooking his swimming pool.

“I just went about my business and wanted to be left alone, a good citizen,” he declared, his voice calm and thoughtful. He talked about his unhappy childhood in Port Chester, and his life the bank had destroyed. “I’m a decent human being,” he stressed. “I help people for a living.”

Having been successful in orchestrating the publicity he desired (The articles painted a picture of a man who was exploited first by a bank, then by the state.) I breathed a sigh of relief and concentrated on advertising and promotion for the major race of the season, called *The President’s Pace*, named after Ricci, the president of Scarborough Downs. During the previous four *Presidents Paces* Ricci hoped the track would break its record \$300,000 handle. But it never happened. Without a clubhouse it was improbable that year.

High rollers and horse owners from throughout the country always arrived for this event, which featured major league pacers from the Meadowlands, and other tracks in New York and New Jersey. Previously these people had been wined and dined as guests in the clubhouse. Ricci wondered how he could host them without a clubhouse. He decided that we’d erect a bright red tent where the clubhouse once sat. Everything was left up to me to make it a special event. “It’s your show,” Ricci told me one day.

I sent embossed invitations to the owners who had horses entered in the race,

administrators from other tracks, the media, and special friends. I hired a caterer to create a magnificent buffet featuring whole turkeys, hams, smoked salmon, chilled lobster, shrimp, canapes and assorted salads along with a special ‘sulky cake’ dessert, featuring the Scarborough Downs logo. I booked a jazz band to play between the races and imported a tropical garden of exotic plants to line the sides of the tent, and the walkway leading to the big top. I even designed a commemorative program for every table, arranged for the ‘call to post’ to be played on an authentic post horn by a member of the Portland Symphony, produced an exciting TV and radio ads, and ordered a full-page ad for the Sunday paper, the day of the race. I worked around the clock pulling it all together and felt optimistic as the event drew near.

The Friday afternoon before the Sunday race, Ricci called a staff meeting. He was sweating, seething, eyes flashing, as he paced around the small conference area in the red shed. He was angry at the race secretary because some of the horses weren’t fast enough. He was unhappy with security procedures, admissions, and parking attendants. He said service in the restaurant was terrible, and the bars were chaotic. Bookkeeping was behind. Everybody was incompetent.

Then he turned to me and asked to see the special cover for the race program, which I thought, was a dramatic improvement over the previous year’s program. He glanced at it, almost sneering. “It will do,” he said sharply, and then turned away. “But you still haven’t got it,” he suddenly screamed. “We’re gonna die this weekend probably because we don’t have a clubhouse, and your ads, they’re just not crude enough! You don’t understand, fans don’t want music, and a professional voice in their ads. They want Lloyd! Until you came, I always used Lloyd in the ads, because it worked. I know what works!”

I was shocked at this lashing out that came from nowhere, especially since I had been putting in seventy-hour weeks for the past month to help him with his lawsuit publicity and do my job at Scarborough Downs too. The season was almost over, and he had never criticized my ads, which it appeared everyone liked and got people to the track.

On the day of the big race, I was at the track by noon when the gates opened. By post time it was obvious that history was in the making. The crowd was enormous. Later in the afternoon I saw mutuel manager, Bobby Leighton grinning from ear to ear. “If we handle what I think we should on the next race

we're going to go over the top, hit \$300,000! It's a miracle without a clubhouse!"

Two races later Ricci approached me in the tent. "This is wonderful," he said, regarding the festive atmosphere. "Everyone I've been talking to is really impressed, and I think we're gonna break a mutuel record too."

Still smarting from the treatment, I received on Friday, I just nodded. "You've done a great job," he added. "How about it if over this winter I teach you all about racing, and you teach me about sophistication? I think we have stuff to learn from one another."

Later Joe's lawyer, John Campbell, and Joe returned to the tent where I was speaking with someone from the press. "Can we talk to you?" Joe interrupted. It was obvious that they had been drinking. We walked over to a corner.

"I told John I want to set up a meeting with you, him, and Dick Poulos to plan my campaign for governor," he announced.

John was smiling broadly. "Really?" I said, not taking the moment too seriously, although he had been talking about running to "expose the corruption in this state." Campbell interrupted. "Did you tell Maura we're going to break a record today?" "Yeah," Ricci answered. "She made it happen, did it all."

"Despite my uncrude ads?" I asked, with a slice of sarcasm. "Yeah. Sorry about that. I apologize," he announced. Then he dramatically got down on his knees and kissed the hem of my ankle length skirt.

Three weeks later the track closed for the season. There was the traditional employee party after the races concluded with a fireworks display. My husband Dan arrived during the last race, and we spent some time socializing. During the night Ricci uncharacteristically ignored me. He made no gesture to meet my husband. But when we on the way to our car directly in our path we spotted Joe and Linda. We all stopped, and cordially exchanged introductions.

In the chilly darkness of a September night the four of us stood facing each other. Little did I realize then how we would all be thrust together during the coming months.

A vacated grandstand is particularly eerie. In October, it was almost impossible to remember the summertime dynamic that had driven my life. Just four cars dotted the track parking area each day owned by a handful of winter staff. The track's flea market began that month. I expected to promote it via print and broadcast ads. But I hadn't bargained on running it, which meant scheduling booth space for all the vendors, and being on-site to collect money and trouble shoot each weekend. After three Saturdays of rising at 5a.m to arrive in time for the 6:30a.m. set up and dealing with nearly a hundred demanding vendors I developed a plan where I didn't have to do the flea market and could work part time. I was at Ricci's house for a meeting with his lawyers when I brought it up. "I understand what you're saying," Ricci said. "That flea market is a cretin's job, forget it. You can still work full-time. I have plenty for you to do."

When I arrived back at the track a half hour later, the track's controller Steve LeClair seemed incredulous. "Andrea is on her way over," he announced, referring to Andrea Beam, a tough sometimes-vulgar woman, who had been the track's bar manager the previous season. "Joe just called and said she should handle the flea market from now on. He says you're going to be too busy handling his campaign for governor!"

The fall was a busy time for me, without the flea market. Construction of the new clubhouse was finally scheduled to begin. I arranged a groundbreaking ceremony for press and friends of the track. Ricci was charming that day, overweight, but a magnet to some of the female sales representatives from TV and radio stations who attended the brunch afterwards. Women were attracted to Ricci, who seemed to have trouble relating to men. Males in his inner circle, apart from Eric, were much shorter than he, and had none of his male swagger.

Carl Webster, Ricci's personal accountant, in his fifties, was a docile soul who had been with him for nearly ten years, the record for any employee. Carl started out in 1975 as controller for Elan, but became Ricci's personal accountant in 1983, after Martha Amesbury arrived on the scene and took responsibility for corporate finances. Carl paid Ricci's credit card bills, looked after his horses and cars, and drove him places, He was on call, in service, around the clock, the American version of a royal foot-man.

Bobby Leighton always acted deferential. The Bobby I witnessed in Ricci's presence was more tense than the jovial, quick to smile Bobby I saw at other times.

Lloyd Johnson did not like Ricci and Joe had disdain for Lloyd whom he regarded as a bum who couldn't hold on to his money. Lloyd was controversial because of his impromptu sarcastic comments about horsemen woven into his race calls, but that appealed to Joe.

Ricci mostly socialized with his lawyer John Campbell. They headed to Horsefeathers, a favorite watering hole, just a block from John's law office. John was a Bowdoin graduate, whose father had been a lawyer. One of his father's friends was Richard Poulos, a short swarthy man with silver hair in his late 50's. An ex federal bankruptcy judge, Poulos opened his own firm on Portland's boutique laden Exchange Street and hired John as an associate. After Ricci fired his Massachusetts lawyer Popeo in 1983, he hired Poulos because of his familiarity with banking practices. Poulos didn't have the time or temperament to deal with Ricci on an almost daily basis. Campbell was not articulate in presenting public argument, but he had a good legal mind, a keen sense of humor, and having a big client like Joe Ricci seemed important to him.

The duo of "Joe and John" became well known around Portland bars and clubs. A story about night spots in an issue of *Maine Times* mentioned "Joe Ricci and his lawyer, ties removed, out one night looking for a toot."

John Campbell worked on many legal matters for Joe, including the annual race date hearings held in the capital of Augusta. These public proceedings before the commission involved presentations by Scarborough Downs and rival Lewiston Raceway. Each summarized its strengths to get awarded the most favorable racing dates the following year.

Ricci was concerned the commission had been expanded from three to five members and he didn't trust the new commissioners. But Scarborough Downs still won its May dates. After the decision the mood was triumphant. About seven of us had dinner afterwards. I received accolades for the visuals I produced, which were in stark contrast to Lewiston's presentation, done crudely in illegible colored pencils. "Our presentation was top flight!" Ricci exclaimed. "Just the way my gubernatorial campaign is going to be. Those imbeciles don't

have a clue to what I'm gonna do.”

During the ensuing weeks I received the usual battery of phone calls from Ricci. I had moved my desk from the unwinterized red shed, back to a closet size office in the grandstand. An electric heater with a blower, would randomly make a loud whooshing sound. Sometimes I had trouble hearing him on the phone, and he got annoyed when I asked him to speak up. He liked to talk softly, sipping sake, while pacing around his kitchen on Blackstrap Road.

I spent Christmas Eve afternoon in my office in the empty grandstand, attempting to make a few phone calls, but nobody was conducting business. I was hoping that Ricci would call and tell us to go home. Just before 4p.m. he called, talked to Steve about something, before he asked to be put through to me.

“Hello,” how ya doing?” he said, speaking almost in a whisper. He complained he had to go out shopping with his secretary and get some gifts. “I’ll call you later when I get home,” he promised. “I have something important to discuss with you.”

A short while later Eric came into my office and slumped down in a chair. “This is awful,” he said. “I want to go home.” His wife and three kids were waiting for him. He had had thought he’d be home by noon, but Ricci had just called and asked him about some questions. He had also told Eric he’d call him back because he had something important to discuss.

“This is crazy!” I blurted. “It’s 4p.m. on Christmas Eve. We’re sitting here because we don’t want to leave early without Joe’s authorization. Think about those times in the summer when we got home late every night after putting in fourteen-hour days. Something is out of balance.”

“It’s holidays,” Eric observed. “It’s a family time and he’s uncomfortable about that, probably doesn’t want us to be home with our kids.” Eric and I chatted for a while until the phone rang. “It’s Joe” Steve announced in a deadpan voice.

“The mall was crazy. I got a few things for Linda. What I wanted to talk to you about can wait Go home, it’s Christmas Eve,” he urged with a tone of great benevolence. “Tell Eric and everybody else to do the same. I’ll see you the day after tomorrow.”

“We’re allowed to go home now,” I announced to Eric. “Joe says everything can wait till the day after Christmas. I hope you’re coming in then, and not planning to take two days off.”

I put on my coat and looked at the clock. It was 5:05p.m.

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The first week in January Ricci filed a lawsuit in Cumberland County Superior Court in Portland against his former law firm of Bernstein, Shur, Sawyer and Nelson and three of the firm’s major partners, alleging professional misconduct. He claimed the lawyers simultaneously represented him and the bank after the bank terminated his credit. Ricci sought \$25 million in damages as well as \$500,000 in legal fees paid to the law firm for handling his business and personal affairs for the past decade. Ricci knew that this suit, like his other one against Key Bank, could take years to resolve. To assuage some of his impatience he concentrated on matters, which would provide more immediate gratification.

## Chapter Thirteen: Appropriated Virtue

The stores in Portland's trendy Old Port were full of messages of love. Colored hearts in every size and texture peeked through the panes of glass in boutique windows, beckoning passersby to embrace the month of sweet sentiment. Joe Ricci spent time in the Old Port in February, but not shopping for loving mementos. He was pacing around the office of his lawyers at 44 Exchange Street, trying to pin the goods on Charlie Day, the governor of Maine, Joe Brennan, and the racing commission.

He was planning to unleash a virulent attack at the next racing commission meeting scheduled for February 14 in Augusta. He said it was to be "a St. Valentine's Day Massacre," referring to a bloody attack by mobster Al Capone in the 1920s.

Just a day earlier he had learned from his hired private investigator that Thomas Kerrigan, one of the new gubernatorial appointees to the racing commission, had once been a neighbor of Charlie Day, principal of Lewiston Raceway and that Kerrigan's golf cart business was in a building partly owned by Day. He also heard that Kerrigan, Day, and their wives might be vacationing together in Florida.

He attempted to dispatch the investigator to Florida to check out the whereabouts of Kerrigan, Day, and their respective spouses. But he was stymied, after discovering that an investigator licensed in Maine cannot conduct investigations in other states. Undeterred he called private investigators in Florida but grew impatient with delays.

He decided to send a guy from Maine named Ed Marcello to Pompano Park Racetrack near where Charlie Day had a winter residence to poke around. Ricci gave Marcello money for a Florida investigator whom he had contracted by phone to do surveillance of Day's property. Marcello returned to New England, with accounts of intrigue. He had posed as an official of Scarborough Downs to racing officials at Pompano Park, claiming he was vice-president of operations and received the red-carpet treatment designed for visiting dignitaries from other tracks. While accepting hospitality he pumped them for information concerning 'his old friends' Kerrigan and Day.

A week before the February 14 commission meeting in Augusta some information arrived from the Florida investigator, but it wasn't conclusive or juicy enough. Consequently, Ed Marcello was whisked off to the offices of Richard Poulos, where John Campbell prepared an affidavit for him to sign. It detailed Marcello's conversations with Pompano Park officials and confirmed both Day and Kerrigan had indeed been in Florida vacationing together.

The day before the commission meeting many of us assembled for a late afternoon meeting at Ricci's house. I was among those seated around the long dining room table with Martha, Eric, Linda, John, and another lawyer, Stephen Devine, an associate of Daniel Lilley, then the trial lawyer for Ricci's suit against Key Bank.

Ricci was sipping sake and scowling. Stephen Devine, a proper looking attorney, who sported a bow tie, was arguing that a guerrilla attack the next day at the hearings was the wrong strategy. "You've got the goods on this guy Kerrigan," Devine observed.

"Let's use it as a bargaining chip with the governor who appointed him. We can let Governor Brennan know that we've learned the truth, get Kerrigan axed, and get someone in that's better for us. If you go in there hollering and screaming tomorrow with this conflict-of-interest stuff, you'll embarrass the governor."

"I'd like to embarrass that scumbag," Ricci responded, but nevertheless authorized Devine to call one of his contacts at the statehouse, tell him what he had for dirty laundry, and see what kind of deal might be offered. Devine got on the phone with a Brennan aide, talked for a while, and got some return calls. He used the house phone in the kitchen adjacent to the dining room and reported back to the table with updates.

Apparently, the governor's office wanted to set up a meeting to discuss Kerrigan, rather than have Ricci go public about the conflict of interest. According to Devine there was the strong implication that the governor would ask Kerrigan to resign. "Take this opportunity," Devine urged. "You've got them squirming where you want them."

Everyone was drinking wine. I noticed that Ricci was losing patience with Devine, and decided I'd stick to sparkling water at the risk of being anti-social.

Ricci abruptly changed the subject. “I’ll think about it. Let’s go out to dinner.” He exited the room, his help left to argue among themselves.

Soon, Linda, who had also left the room briefly, returned. “Joe wants to see you upstairs,” she told me, raising her eyebrows to indicate that she didn’t know why. Then she went around the table refilling everyone’s wine glass.

I climbed the darkened front hall staircase. I had never been anywhere in the house other than the dining room, kitchen, downstairs bathroom, and library. When I reached the top of the stairs Ricci’s voice called out. “I’m in the bathroom, through the bedroom. Take a left.”

I walked through the bedroom. In the adjacent bathroom Ricci stood, facing the mirror, in front of one of two gold plated sinks. He was bare-chested, revealing his torso trimmed by his daily weight training, which he had begun in the fall to prepare for his gubernatorial campaign. His face was lathered with shaving cream. I approached, feeling uncomfortable, but determined to act like watching my employer shave in his bathroom, without his shirt on was just part of the territory, an added element to my ever-expanding job description.

“Whatta ya think about what’s going on down there?” he asked as he passed the blade across his cheek. Without waiting for my reply, he continued. “I think it’s a load of, excuse the expression, horseshit. This pandering to the likes of Joe Brennan is not my style. I was flushing Devine out, just seeing where he was coming from. Nothing is gonna be decided tonight. We’re gonna just go there tomorrow as planned and blow their heads off. So why don’t you go home, and rest. Get back here in the morning and we’ll all drive to Augusta together and then we can talk, without interference from that jerk.”

The next day John, Joe, Linda, and I drove to Augusta in Linda’s Mercedes. John and Joe, sitting in the back, were hung over from ‘dinner’ the previous night. Linda seemed chipper as she sped down the driveway, and followed instructions to stop at a little market, where Ricci ran in briefly, returning with a packet of cigarettes, and a can of beer. Despite his physical state, he also seemed in a good mood, adrenaline pumping as he headed toward what liked best, a public confrontation.

“Let’s take bets,” he urged, as he leaned toward the front seat. “Who says

Kerrigan is not gonna show? Who says both Kerrigan and Day won't show?  
Who Says Kerrigan and Day both show? Who says one shows?"

"I say Kerrigan will be there, but Charlie Day will be a no show," I volunteered.

Joe asked, "If you're right what do you want?"

"A bottle of Pouilly Fuisse," I replied, saying the first thing that came to mind.  
"You got it." Joe stated, directing his attention then to his lawyer, with the enthusiasm of a game show host. "I don't know," John ventured. "I'll bet neither will show, buy them some time. They still don't know what we're gonna do."

"Well, John, if you're right," Joe laughed, "the little weasels are more stupid than I thought. If you're right I'll buy you dinner," he added dryly, as it was understood Joe always picked up the tab. "But if you're wrong you can work out a deal with your slave master Poulos to do something to reduce my already astronomical legal fees. What about you Kiko?" Joe asked, using his pet name for Linda. "I think they'll probably both be there," she responded, thoughtfully. "I love you babe," Joe chuckled. "I want them both to be there, face the music. Good old Charlie will probably slink in again, wearing one of his Sears' polyester suits, and a gold chain or two, so we know he's 'mod.' Did you know," he asked directing the question at me, "that sleazebag made his fortune from Value House? It's worse than JC Penny's and Sears. It's a place that caters to the green stamp crowd!" John roared with laughter, as his client continued his spell of good humor all the way to the Augusta Civic Center.

Nobody in the car that morning mentioned the altercation that had taken place the previous evening during dinner. Ricci had continued to drink and became abusive towards Devine, who finally got angry enough to get up from the table before the entrees arrived, throw a twenty-dollar bill on the table for his meal, and leave. That morning Ricci told his secretary to take a bottle containing the pieces of that bill, torn into tiny bits to Devine's law office and personally place it on his desk.

The commission meeting was explosive. The third item on the day's agenda was a reconsideration of the commission's allotment of the 1985 racing dates. Scarborough Downs, having already won May, had petitioned for the long sought-after authorization to get additional dates and race concurrently with Lewiston. It was a request that had been made and turned down many times, but

it was a concept Scarborough Downs kept pushing.

Just before the discussion of this item opened, John Campbell approached the microphone beneath the stage where four commissioners sat, the accused Kerrigan among them. He told the commission that on behalf of Scarborough Downs he was requesting that Commissioner Kerrigan be disqualified from this hearing because of obvious bias. Another commissioner, Charles Moreshed, also an attorney, suggested that the hearing not proceed that afternoon until written charges were presented and a separate hearing held on this accusation.

Ricci bolted down the aisle from the back of the auditorium where he'd been standing. "Thomas Kerrigan should resign as commissioner," he shouted, "And Charlie Day (who was not present) should be forced to cut all his connections with Lewiston Raceway."

John managed to interject the basis of the charges, namely that Kerrigan was a former neighbor and close friend of Day, and that Kerrigan and his wife had recently been in Florida for a week's vacation at Day's Pompano Beach home. Moreshed restated his position that these charges should be presented in writing and a hearing held to discuss them. Other commissioners concurred, and the meeting was about to adjourn, but Ricci continued. "This is serious stuff," he asserted. "We have reports here from a private investigator in Florida... These charges should be aired in public." Moreshed assured everyone that the next meeting to discuss these charges would be public and attempted to explain the legal procedure.

Lewiston Raceway attorney George Isaacson then got into the act, shouting that Joe Ricci's behavior was entirely inappropriate. "We've observed Mr. Ricci's charges here before," he shouted. "Mr. Day isn't even here to defend himself."

"You people should all be ashamed of yourselves," Ricci bellowed. Then as an afterthought added smugly, "I'm a gambler. You can tell the attorney general that I'm hedging my bets. I'm not giving you all the information I've collected. I'm saving part of it."

I don't remember the ride home, except that someone mentioned to 'the gambler' that I had won the morning's bet, Kerrigan was there, but not Day. Joe just grunted. I never got my bottle of Pouilly Fuisse.

The Kerrigan saga raged on for almost two months. After reading Marcello's affidavit concerning his conversations with racing officials at Pompano Beach, Lewiston hired its own legitimate investigators to go down and speak to the same people. This resulted in signed affidavits denying they said what Marcello had attributed to them.

In early March Lewiston Raceway wrote the Department of Public Safety asking it to investigate Marcello engaging in private investigative services without a license. It also wrote to the racing commission, charging that Marcello has promised a female trainer at Pompano Park that he would fix races for her at Scarborough Downs if she brought her horses to Maine.

Edward Marcello had egg on his face and became indignant. He spoke with his friend Bruce Glasier, a sports director for a Portland TV station, and arranged for Glasier to conduct an on-camera interview with Ricci about the whole Kerrigan deal. A camera crew from the station came to Scarborough Downs and set up in my dingy office. Glasier went over his questions beforehand with Ricci, who charged the commissioners and the governor with corruption. He said on camera he would continue to work to get "these sleazebags out of the racing industry."

When the racing commission met again it determined it did not have any legal authority to censor or remove a fellow commissioner. Governor Brennan met with Kerrigan regarding the charges and left the matter in Kerrigan's own hands, instructing him to decide how to resolve the problem. Kerrigan insisted he had exercised good faith in past proceedings and would not be influenced by his acquaintance with Charlie Day. Ricci outraged that Kerrigan was left to be the judge of his own bias, called for the governor to force him to resign. He also said he was going to file a lawsuit to remove Kerrigan from the commission.

*The Portland Press Herald* ran an editorial urging Kerrigan to resign, stating the appearance of conflict is something that must not happen. *Maine Times* began preparing a major article about the issue, complete with an extensive sidebar piece focusing on how Joe Ricci had brought harness racing in Maine out of the smoke-filled rooms.

A few days after these two articles titled: "*Tom Kerrigan could not see where the conflict lies. Joe Ricci Could*" and "*The Flamboyant Joe Ricci challenged the status quo*" hit the newsstands, Kerrigan resigned. Joe Ricci won, and he

strengthened his coveted image as an avenger of injustice.

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Six weeks before the track was scheduled to open for another season, we were all still wearing hard hats and climbing ladders to the third-floor dining room. Ricci's uncle Tom (Bamboo's brother) a retired builder had been called in to act as construction foreman for the new clubhouse, after a screw-up by the initial construction company. Joe and his uncle had a difference of opinion the previous spring, so he had been excluded from being involved in the clubhouse project. But desperate to get the job done, Uncle Tom was called back to help pick up the pieces.

I noticed how deferential uncle Tom was, careful not to rile Joe in any way.

"You're the only one who knows what you're doing'," Tom observed during one of his breaks in which he good-naturedly plopped himself into a chair in my office. "It's really good that Joe gives you space," he remarked. "My nephew seems to like you, which is really important. If my nephew doesn't like you, forget it."

The new clubhouse, with its five hundred seat restaurant, two bars and deli, meant an increase in my responsibilities. In addition to creating and producing the advertising for the track, and managing a six-figure media buying budget, Ricci asked me to supervise special sales. He wanted a group sales division to sell and coordinate functions during the racing season, and book off-season parties too. He also wanted to sell billboard space in the grandstand and clubhouse to advertisers, and envisioned an electronic tote board on the infield, as another profit center.

Making it operational was left up to me. I hired a sales director, developed a series of corporate, bus tour packages for that season and created a concept called "track ads," mounted images produced and sold as advertising.

Eventually I signed another one-year employment contract that guaranteed \$10,000 more than I had made the previous year, and a leased Honda Accord. It was a hefty increase. I thanked Ricci for his generosity. "I don't call it being generous," he stated. "You're an investment, and this is business."

## **Chapter Fourteen: Who's zoomin' who?**

During the spring of 1985, an incident provided a new perspective on the man I had been trying to figure out.

I was sitting at the dining room table on Blackstrap Road with Martha and Linda. Joe had been talking about his suit against Key Bank. Pacing around the room, sipping sake and smoking, he mentioned, at first matter of factly, that he'd had a 'falling out' with his sons, Jason, and Noah then nine and eleven, not much younger than the children he treated at Elan.

He said his sons had visited him the previous weekend and used swear words. "They don't respect me," he confided looking sad, then defiant. "I told them they weren't welcome here until they act respectful to Linda and me in our home. I mean I can't let those kids ride roughshod over me. I deserve respect."

Weeks later his comments took on a different dimension when he angrily shared a letter from Maine's Department of Human Services. The letter informed him that the department had received a complaint from a psychiatrist who had been treating his sons. This psychiatrist, not mentioned by name, had filed an abuse charge, based upon sessions he had with Ricci's sons directly after their last visit to their father's house. The letter indicated Ricci had apparently traumatized one of his children by repeatedly pushing his head against a wall. It said that it was the department's responsibility to notify parties involved in a charge of abuse, though no further investigation was planned. The last line said that if the complaint was true, the abuser should realize that "such action was not acceptable."

Ricci was angry. He had not seen his children since the weekend he said he had a 'falling out.' Learning they had told their psychiatrist about it he didn't express any concern for their well-being. Instead, he was furious at them for discussing and their mother for "obviously putting them up to it."

He said his sons' psychiatrist was probably part of a conspiracy to discredit him. He told John Campbell to call the Department of Human Services to get to the bottom of the matter. But before John made the call Ricci told his version of what happened the last time he saw his sons.

"It was really nothing at all," he began, explaining in confusing fashion how his sons had apparently gotten hold of Playboy magazines. He had heard them laughing and using swear words so he told them it was unacceptable. He said he took the magazines away, and asked eleven-year-old Jason to stand in a corner to think about his actions. He said his son "had a real nasty attitude." "I held him in the corner for a short time, and then suggested he and Noah go home until they could return and be respectful guests in this house. he said "All weekend they were running around wildly, no respect for the house or for Linda or me. Now I'm being victimized."

I remember thinking Joe Ricci was in the business of rehabilitating adolescents, and his own sons were saying he abused them. Could the Department of Human Services have been teaming up with the attorney general's office, Joe's ex-wife, and his two young sons in a concerted effort to discredit him ? I had been conditioned to believe Joe Ricci. The scenarios he created were often believable, but something did not ring true in his depiction of the 'falling out.' Had his relationship with them been so fragile, that they would betray their father by making up a story about abuse?

Ricci said he wanted to know the name of the psychiatrist. He made calls to a few area doctors, and left threatening messages with receptionists saying he was paying his sons' medical bills, and if X, Y or Z doctor was treating the Ricci boys he was entitled to know all the details. He told each receptionist to call his lawyer, John Campbell.

Finally, John arranged a meeting with the person from the Department of Human Services who had written the letter. The meeting occurred at Richard Poulos's office. Joe never mentioned what happened at that meeting or the incident ever again.

A person who knew about that abusive afternoon gave this account:

*"The kids were downstairs playing. I guess Joe thought Jason, his older son, had said a bad word so he just started slamming his head against the wall. Jason said, 'I didn't say it' and then Noah said, 'Daddy I'm the one who said It.' Joe said, 'Noah, you would never do that' and went back to hurting Jason. Then Joe ran upstairs and got some Playboy magazines. He said, 'Have you kids been looking at these?' He started laughing, and said, 'I would have done the same*

*thing when I was your age. ' But then he threw the magazine in the kitchen sink, and set them on fire, with the flames shooting up. Noah started crying. Joe told him 'I'm going upstairs. I'm going to burn your beds, so you never, ever come back here. I've adopted two little Korean boys and they're going to be my children now. '" Allegedly he threw them in a van and had his security guard take the boys home to their mother.*

According to his ex-wife Sherry, after learning of the abuse charges against him, Ricci went over to her house, pounded on the door demanding she tell him the name of the psychiatrist who had reported him. She wouldn't. Later he called her and said he was going to make sure she lost all stocks and bonds and anything she had saved, force her to lose her house, and fix it so she'd never get a job anywhere in the state.

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Oscar, the new chef for the Scarborough Downs clubhouse dining room was a big man, almost seven feet tall, with a friendly smile that revealed he had only one front tooth. He was hired after two others had turned down the position because the clubhouse kitchen was not yet complete. Menus had to be created and food ordered, all in less than a month.

"You'd have to be a masochist to attempt to serve five hundred people from that kitchen anytime before July," remarked one chef prospect. After Ricci met Oscar, shook his hand, and welcomed him, he took Martha aside to tell him to call a dentist and get another front tooth. "I don't want him coming near the dining room, or talking to our customers looking like that."

On May 1, the Friday before opening the clubhouse restaurant we gathered for a dry run of the kitchen operation with a sampling of the season's menu. About thirty people, department heads and their spouses assembled in the new dining room for dinner on a claret carpeted floor, which only a week earlier had been covered with nails and debris. Tiered tables were dressed in white linen with salmon runners. Vases of flowers adorned the room, which glowed in the early evening. The transformation had been remarkable, and an air of excited anticipation filled the room, as the sun set over the racetrack. Those of us who had already spent a season at the track knew the room would never be as quiet again on a Friday evening, for at least 120 more nights.

On opening day, the fans swarmed in, marveling at the new clubhouse. The women were adorned in floral silk prints dresses and flowing skirts, some in wide brimmed hats. The men wore blazers, neatly pressed pants and bucks or striped sports shirts emblazoned with designer logos.

I arrived early that Sunday, tending to the details of the second annual opening day extravaganza, complete with stunt air show, elephant, and camels.

Ten minutes before the gates opened at noon Ricci summoned all department heads to a meeting in the conference room on the second floor of the clubhouse. Within minutes all the managers were arriving, some out of breath from the trek over from the grandstand. When everyone was assembled, he closed the door, and buzzed the receptionist, notifying her that he didn't want to be disturbed.

Dressed in jeans, and a sweatshirt, his face looked puffy, his eyes darker than usual. He peered out the window at the arriving fans, as a general would watch approaching enemy troops. There was not a sound in the room. Nobody knew what the boss was going to say or do next. The fans were inside the gates, and each person in the room had an important function that demanded immediate attention. Yet Ricci seemed not to care that managers had keys to cash registers that needed to be open, and banks had to be counted before sales could even occur during one of the busiest days of the season.

He stood staring out the window, dragging on his cigarette, back turned to the faces anxiously focused up at him. Finally, he spun around and spoke. "Guys," he began, his voice low and ominous.

"This is it. Before the day is out a lot of people in this room might be unemployed, and a lot of other people out there," he continued, gesturing with his hand beyond the closed door, "might also be out of a job because you screw up. This isn't fun and games," he sneered. "Just wait and see who's going to end up working at McDonalds next week. I just want to let you know..." Without finishing the thought, he spat. "Forget it. Just get outta here," before he opened the door and walked away, leaving his employees to scurry back to their respective posts. "Quite a pep talk," one manager muttered to himself as everyone filed out of the conference room.

An hour later I was summoned to the clubhouse dining room, where Ricci was

seated in a corner near the bar sipping coffee.

“Sit down,” he gestured as I approached.

“What did you think about the meeting this morning?”

“I figured you knew something I didn’t,” I responded. “What happened?” “It’s too long a story. I’ve been exploited,” he announced. All the managers are just waiting to steal from me. I didn’t get any sleep last night. I think I’d better go home. Now there’s a problem with the TV sets, and it’s looks like it’s going to take a graduate of MIT to figure it out.”

At that moment I was paged to call the receptionist. A reporter from a local TV station had arrived and wanted to talk to Mr. Ricci about his new clubhouse and new season. “I’m not talking to anyone today,” he scowled. “You handle it.”

During the rest of the day, I answered questions from the TV stations and print reporters. I smiled on camera and stated how smoothly everything was running, what great expectations Joe Ricci had for Scarborough Downs that year and during the years ahead. “The new clubhouse signals a new era for harness racing in Maine,” I observed. “There will be more fans exposed to this exciting sport, and it can only get better and better.”

Opening day resulted in many casualties. One of them was the new chef who was fired even before he kept his dentist appointment. But the hectic pace continued for me. Working twelve-hour days, I had no time to reflect on the fates of my co-workers. I was simply surviving, trying to be as professional as possible.

Then Dr. Davidson called and asked me to begin retail advertising for Elan in some up-scale big city magazines to recruit kids from wealthy families. He told me the state of Maine revised its rules and regulations and had not renewed Elan’s license as a residential childcare facility. This meant it was no longer getting state referrals, and the enrollment was decreasing. So that summer I placed advertisements for Elan in magazines in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. The headline, supplied by Dr. Davidson asked: *“What do you do when a good kid goes bad?”* Supporting copy promoted, what Davidson said was “Elan’s 93 percent success rate.”

The new Downs' clubhouse included a private apartment on the floor of administrative offices. It had a large living room, a galley kitchen and a small bedroom and bath. It was Joe Ricci's home away from Blackstrap Road. Many nights after racing and parties with the bar personnel he would go there, not always alone, and never with Linda. Sometimes he would emerge just before noon in various stages of dress, instructing the receptionist to call security to give him a ride home.

Sometimes he would demand the keys to the upstairs bar so he could pour himself a drink. He'd sit in the empty clubhouse dining room, play his favorite music over the dining room's sound system, and invite an employee or two to sit with him and listen while he talked about the weaknesses of others.

Occasionally he would become pugnacious and summon various staff to his table where he would hold court. When they arrived, they'd be subject to ridicule, warned, and sent on their way. They could be even fired outright, though he mostly delegated the task of termination to Martha whom he affectionately called 'the piranha.'

There were rumors about dalliances, occurring after hours in the apartment with a variety of cocktail waitresses. I gave little thought to how much was fact or fiction, though I did suspect that there might be a different dimension to Joe Ricci other than the beleaguered champion of justice version he presented to me.

One cocktail waitress rolled her eyes after reading a narrative style ad titled: "*All Excesses Are Awful,*" I wrote in response to an article in a local paper which portrayed gambling as a vice. It read: "Scarborough Downs despises compulsive gambling as well as compulsive drinking, eating, dieting, and anything done to excess because, quite simply, all excesses lead to trouble."

"Did Joe Ricci authorize this? she asked in disbelief "Talk about the cat calling the kettle black!"

It was much later that I learned the extent of Joe Ricci's excesses.

A close associate recalled being shown a bag of cocaine, which was "enough for

a good size party.” He said Ricci and one of his new lawyers, hung out in Ricci’s apartment, emerging a few hours later totally “whacked out.” He said Ricci later reached in his pocket to offer him some, but the bag was empty. “I couldn’t believe two people could have consumed that much stuff and still have been standing,” he exclaimed.

Despite Joe Ricci’s avowed concern for the status of women there are numerous indications he repeatedly exploited the females in his life, regarding them as nothing more than horses in his stable. Some like Linda were viewed as expensive show horses. “Linda was definitely an Arabian. Owning her dignified him,” remarked one observer. An employee in the clubhouse dining room remembered Ricci and John Campbell at the clubhouse late at night after the races:

“They would be sitting there drinking watching about twenty food and cocktail waitresses counting the night’s receipts, cashing out. Joe would smile in their direction and say to John ‘Let’s go over and cull a couple from the herd.’” Some females, formerly employed at Scarborough Downs clubhouse, told me they succumbed to Joe Ricci’s charms, but his seduction usually consisted of a one-night stand, and after he conquered it was no longer sexual. He would give raises, make bountiful promises, and then fire them.

Ricci gambled heavily at Scarborough Downs, despite a letter to horsemen and women in which he specifically promised not to bet on the races or race his own horses at the track. According to informed sources he spent many thousands of dollars buying pari-mutuel tickets. Sometimes he would buy them outright. Other times, he’d place bets via a phone call from his apartment to the mutuel line, a highly unorthodox and possibly illegal practice.

In 1985 I asked track controller Steve LeClair why some line-item expenditures from my advertising budget, were unusually high. He told not to worry because it wasn’t a realistic indication of my actual expenses. He whispered that Ricci’s gambling money had been written off to that account. It was later intimated it also accounted for his cocaine expenses.

In the June 2, 1985, edition of *Maine Sunday Telegram*, harness racing columnist Hank Burns, wrote a profile of Joe titled: “*Getting A Handle on Scarborough’s Joe.*”

Burns observed how Ricci's gold neck chains contrasted with his tanned face, how he smoked Merit Lights and sipped red burgundy wine laced with liqueur, how he took off his Faberge sunglasses while checking the time on his Rolex watch.

Burns wrote that he asked Ricci during an interview: "Who are you anyway?" Ricci rose from his chair and declared, "Look, you want to know. I'll tell you. Just listen to the music I'm going to play for you."

The clubhouse rocked with Bruce Cockburn's lyrics:

*"If I had a rocket launcher, I'd make someone pay. I don't believe in generals and their stinking torture states. I don't believe in hate, but if I had a rocket launcher I'd retaliate. If I had a rocket launcher, some son of a bitch would die."*

Burns was rattled by the revolutionary music, but Ricci said the song just reflected "his outrage at the exploitation of people."

He told Burns, "I'm a capitalist who believes in humanity."

Hank Burns' portrayal of Ricci was that of a man who has launched many crusades, a person who had disdain for the rigid establishment, a man who fought back when he encountered injustice. His choice of the term 'crusade' conjured up a zealous fight for a principle, a movement of reform for the betterment of people. Yet all of Joe Ricci's crusades' have had one central theme, one central purpose - his own empowerment. Every battle has been based solely upon his desire to wrestle control of a situation and exploit it for his benefit.

When I read Hank Burns' column on a sunny Sunday morning in June as I got ready to spend my day working at Scarborough Downs, the irony within the article escaped me. Though I had noted disparity then between what Ricci said and did, I still didn't have a clue about Joe Ricci's true persona. I wasn't yet privy to the research that revealed his earlier life, his knack as Dr. Pet observed, "for getting others to do his bidding." I knew little about Elan then, and certainly had no inkling about the events that would occur in the next twelve months.

## **PART III**

## **Chapter Fifteen: An elite hit squad?**

The summer of 1985 was when my seduction began. It wasn't a seduction in a sexual sense, more insidious than that. Joe Ricci was out to seduce my soul.

I approached Joe Ricci based on his own self-portrayal, and for the most part, he kept in character in his personal dealings with me. He expressed concern for "working people" during our conversations, though it was always put in a political context. "They are so corrupt," he would say with sweeping generality, not bothering to define who 'they' were. It was understood that 'they' didn't care about people. 'They' were greedy and had no feelings for anyone but themselves. 'They' were trying to exploit all of us.

Ricci said if he threw his hat into the political arena and ran for governor of Maine, he could expose the injustices on a state level.

One evening in July I arrived home from Scarborough Downs about 9p.m. When I walked through my breezeway, I heard my husband Dan talking on the phone. After a few more moments, he hung up the receiver, and beamed at me with the enthusiasm of a boy scout ready to do some trail blazing.

"I've just had a half hour talk with Joe," he announced. "It was a great conversation. We talked about philosophy and politics, and he wants me to help run his campaign for governor." I stared; at the man I loved feeling a pervasive chill. Ricci had gotten in the habit of chatting with my husband during the previous months whenever he answered the phone. More recently he began calling before I got home from work, which I thought was odd.

Had he purposefully been doing this to get to know Dan? During their chats Ricci had learned that my husband was a philosophical thinker with a history of social activism. He had apparently sized him up, and decided he was intelligent, socially conscious, a bit of a gadfly, and - because of his accident-in a position of need. Joe Ricci had pegged all his "tells."

Dan was thrilled, having been unable to return to the stress of his running a hotel kitchen. He was pleased that a successful and powerful person such as Joe Ricci sought his help. Dan, a trained chef, musician, and composer of music, told Ricci

he had little experience with politics. “We’ll learn as we go,” Joe responded. “I don’t give a rat’s ass whether I’m elected. I just want to expose the corruption and give them all a run for their money.”

Joe Ricci lost no time forging forward. Although he asked my opinion on many matters, he never once inquired how I felt about his having persuaded my husband to join his bandwagon. It was obviously assumed that we both shared Ricci’s political ideologies and would enlist in his infantry.

In August, while I was during preparations for the track’s annual President’s Pace, Ricci scheduled a meeting at his house. He wanted to gather a group of people to discuss his gubernatorial campaign. It was Dan’s first visit to Blackstrap Road. We arrived together for the morning meeting. Linda who poured coffee, told us she was planning to be an unofficial committee member, since as a registered Republican, it would be awkward for her to work in the Democratic primary. “I’ll just sit and listen,” she declared. “I’m just not used to this political stuff”. With a chuckle, she added, “I still don’t believe Joe is really going to run for governor.”

We were joined by Sharon Terry, the executive director at Elan, a woman in her late forties, whom I had met once before. She had salt and pepper colored hair and protruding upper front teeth. Stylishly dressed in a sweater and skirt ensemble she looked respectable. She began at Elan, four years earlier as a secretary. Though she had no training in mental health or any professional credentials she rose in the Elan ranks to be Ricci’s right-hand person, making an annual salary, one former Elan administrator speculated, was “close to \$100,000.”

We were told John Campbell, Joe’s attorney would join us later.

Dan and I passed out the meeting agenda Ricci asked us to prepare. It covered a range of subjects, including officers for the campaign committee, descriptions of committees and recruitment of volunteers. It also focused on the acquisition of campaign headquarters, field offices, staffing and equipment. Ricci looked at the agenda and complimented our thoroughness.

“Well, guys”, “he began with a sigh, borne of his aversion to structure. “Let’s get through this. What about a campaign manager?” Dan and I decided that

given Ricci's 'take charge' attitude, he should reserve that title for himself. Neither of us wanted that burden. "We thought you could manage your own," I offered.

"Well, I was thinking that this would be the campaign management right here," he answered agreeably, sweeping his hand to include all of us seated at the table. "Because God knows, my ideas are far from fallible," he said, making me smile, since he used the word fallible, instead of infallible.

"But let me ask you this," he continued. "Who the hell do we know who's famous, honest, and decent? That's a hell of a question, I know, but we need a chairman of the committee, a figurehead position. Right? How about Father Bob Allanach?" he finally asked, referring to the Oblate priest who was employed as director of counseling at Elan.

"Yeah, Father Bob would be good," Sharon, said. "He's done a lot for the community, though I guess he's not re-ally well known." "You don't have to be well known," Ricci interrupted her with a cynical smile. "If you're a priest and can jiggle beads and make devils go away, you're great!" That line delivered he left the room. A minute later we heard him on the phone, informing Father Bob that the committee had drafted him.

Returning to the table he announced it was all set with Father Bob and that he would also assist in the solicitation of signatures, mobilizing volunteers to help get the names needed to get on the ballot in June. "It's too bad we can't start getting the signatures now, while the track's open, and we have 300 employee signatures built in," he observed, confident all his employees would sign.

"Can I say something, change the subject for a moment?" he asked, knowing he needed no permission. "This is going to sound very dramatic, but it's half the reason I was up all night," he said, lowering his voice and slowing its cadence, his demeanor becoming solemn.

"It's going to get scary. They're just not going to sit back and let me get out with my message. They know we're gonna put them in jail. We've got to spend some money for security, especially a guard for the plane. I'm gonna have it thoroughly checked out each time we go anywhere. I'm throwing in \$150,000 of my own money to get going, \$125,000 because I'm keeping \$25,000 to pay the

interest on this money I'm borrowing. I suppose I should also keep some funds for a flak jacket, and just hope they don't aim for my head."

John Campbell arrived. Ricci gave him a quick greeting, that of a man lost in thought, and then remembered that he had a question for him. "John, is a blind trust reversible? Because if I win, I guess I got to put all my stuff in a trust, and when I get out, I just don't wanna be begging for food on Congress Street." Linda and Sharon laughed aloud, and so did John.

The subject shifted to a 'Unity Day' the state Democratic Party had scheduled for mid-October. All the gubernatorial candidates would be there shaking hands and soliciting supporters for the primaries in June.

Looking at me, he asked, "Do you mind if I jump around a little? I'd like to talk about campaign colors, Have you thought about it? And slogans? Do you have any in mind? Because I had some thoughts. How about this?" he asked, pausing to make sure Sharon, Linda, Dan, John, and I were all looking up at him

*'Joseph Ricci... A governor only the people's money can buy.'* Whatta you think?"

Sharon bobbed her head like a trained trail horse. "I think it's great Joe. It's got the grass roots approach. You know there is corruption in government and that you'll be a governor for the people. I think it's excellent Joe."

I was not as effusive. "Maybe it's just me because I deal with words all the time," I began, "But I'm afraid that statement could be misconstrued. People might take it that you indeed can be bought." He looked momentarily stunned but recovered. "*Well, how about 'Joseph J. Ricci. A governor that can't be bought.'*"

I nodded.

"Who's to say we have just one bumper sticker?" he asked.

"Why not have a series of slogans like '*Joseph Ricci for governor: This one for the people*' Or How about '*Isn't it time someone regulates them?*' Or try this on '*Joseph Ricci for governor: No compromise, No collusion. No bullshit!*' "

"You can't say bullshit," John said laughing. "Why not?" Joe asked shrugging.

Immediately Sharon began lobbying for Joe. “I think it’s important that people get that message. People say bullshit and could really identify...”

“But you offend more people,” John countered as Linda readily agreed with John. “That slogan would take the whole bumper,” I observed.

“How about some Longley slogans?” John asked, referring to an independent party candidate who served as governor of Maine during the late 1970s. “You’re an outsider like him, a non-machine candidate.”

“Nahh. We can’t do that,” Ricci replied. “Besides we got more than enough of our own. How do you like this: ‘*Send them a message: Joseph Ricci for governor.*’”

He continued in his element:

“You know John, that’s what the guy in the gas station pumping gas said to me: ‘Send them a message.’ You gotta understand something. There are so many individuals who have been shit on, who really want to send a message to the boys in Augusta. Anyway, I have this great idea for a TV ad : We get a cartoon made in caricatures. You have this smoke-filled room, and all the other candidates seated around a table looking up at a guy who looks at them individually and says things like: ‘You want nursing homes, you got em...’ ‘You want condos you got them’ and so on...Then the screen goes black, and a voice says: ‘*Put an end to this nonsense. Joseph Ricci for governor.*’”

“Wow,” Sharon responded. “You better get a full-time guard on the plane for security.”

“You like it huh?” he asked smiling. “Nobody’s ever done anything like that before. You got to understand something,” he continued, addressing all of us. “If we’re going to win this thing, we’re going to beat them with originality.”

The meeting had been going on for two hours. It was noon. Ricci had abandoned the agenda in favor of brainstorming slogans and planning bumper stickers and signs.

“What about a campaign manager? ”John asked. “The campaign manager doesn’t exist,” Dan responded. “We’re going to run the campaign by committee,

this group.” “Well, I think there really needs to be at least one person, with some political savvy who’s responsible,” John observed. Joe glared at John and cut him off, his voice low. “We already discussed it,” he announced irritably. “And you don’t agree?” John asked, his voice wavering. “No,” Ricci replied. “And you know why? Look at how many we got in this room, he said pointing to John, Sharon, Linda, Dan, and me.

“But there’s something unique about running a political campaign.” John pressed on. “Yeah, not with us it isn’t,” Joe retorted. “We don’t want an outsider, who’s just gonna come in, and you know what their gonna do. Want me to tell you something John?” he suddenly declared. “If we have a campaign manager, he’s right there,” he said pointing to Dan.

Dan sat in his chair, not knowing whether to challenge Ricci or not. He was getting ready to say something when John asked, “Does he have experience in politics?”

“Not running a gubernatorial election,” Dan said.

“Listen John,” Ricci said, adopting a lecturer stance:

“What can the complexities be? We’ve got to get our message out to the people. We’ve got to campaign and talk to groups. We’ve got to do a direct mailing. We’ve got offices. Ya know what I think you bring on with an experienced politico? You bring on all the old shit!”

Realizing that Ricci was about to heap a major responsibility on my unsuspecting spouse I jumped in. “You know,” I said, looking directly at Joe. “I understand what John ‘s saying, about having contact with some-one who knows about inside stuff. Maybe someone with experience in Maine politics, with some insights to share.”

“Yes,” Linda agreed. “Someone who might think of things we might not think about.” But Ricci was adamant. “The only thing we must worry about is that we don’t come off too radical with our message and isolate ourselves. If we go out and hire a known political type to run our campaign, we’re full of shit. I just don’t want a ‘campaign manager’ who’s going to tell me ‘Say this, don’t say that don’t do this, do that.’ You know why? Because it’s a matter of my social

consciousness. If I win, I want to win because I got my message out, and voters believed it. I may lose. But if I lose, I'll lose honestly. You know here in this room we all trust one another. We're not going to intentionally deceive each other. We can bounce things around, have dialogue and say, 'Yes that sounds good' or 'Maybe that should be changed,' he declared.

"But I'll tell you this. The worst thing that can happen is for us to go to a debate and have them know what we're gonna say. We'll get slam-dunked. This group can't get much larger than this. It has to be kept very small and, for lack of a better word, Gestapo-like. It must be an elite hit squad."

## **Chapter Sixteen: Fighting for the people**

Members of the Local 6 Industrial Union of Marine and Shipbuilding Workers at Bath Ironworks in Maine had been on strike nearly three months in a bitter struggle with shipyard management. Joe Ricci decided to focus on their plight.

One morning I received an urgent call. Ricci had a brainstorm overnight. The track would be closing soon, and dormant until the October flea market. Why couldn't he demonstrate his support for the union by staging a fund-raiser on the track's infield. "We can bring in a name talent to perform, charge ten bucks a ticket, and donate the money to the strike fund." "He asked me to call the president of the union to explain the offer. "You gotta do it right now," he insisted. "Because we gotta pull it off within the month. You know they might settle, and we'll miss a perfect opportunity."

Union president Ray Ladd was gracious on the phone, after I explained that Joe Ricci wanted to donate all concert profits, even those from the concessions. "We need all the help we can get," he declared, giving me the go ahead to plan a benefit concert for the depleted strike fund. After we agreed upon a date for the benefit, I promised to update him concerning progress.

Dan and I contracted tech assistance, planned publicity, and met with at least a dozen agents. Singer Tom Rush said he'd perform for a reduced fee. Dan and I believed in the union. We didn't mind when Ricci said he wanted to go on TV, appearing in an ad for the strike aid concert. "I guess he's got to get some political mileage out of it," Dan observed.

We worked until late at night organizing this event. At midnight, when our phone was finally quiet, we would share a glass of wine and reaffirm our commitment to the principles Joe was espousing, though we knew he had an unconventional way of doing it.

When I called to update the union president Ray Ladd on the concert's progress, he was unavailable. I phoned him at least three times before I finally received a call from Milt Dudley, coordinator of the strike at the Bath Shipyard. "I'm sorry," his voice said with a brittleness that conveyed no apology. "But the union has decided, we don't want to be associated with your benefit." "What? There

must be some mistake," I stammered, unable to comprehend "I talked to Ray Ladd nearly two weeks ago, and he gave me the go ahead. We've set everything in motion."

"No mistake," Dudley responded. "Ray had no authority. We took a vote. We must be careful about the character of those we are associated with," he said spitting out each word vehemently as though the vowels were inadequate to express the rage that simmered beneath their surface.

"Oh, then this is about Joe Ricci," I responded, thinking that was an example of the prejudice Ricci always talked about. Because of what Key Bank had done to him, people thought he was bad, a Mafioso. "The concert was always about Joe Ricci," Dudley answered like a pressure cooker ready to explode. "Everything Joe Ricci does is always about Joe Ricci. I worked for the guy once at his treatment center in Poland Spring. When I was first hired to do some maintenance and repairs, I was promised a raise in thirty days, something about a fiscal budget. A month went by, then two more weeks, no raise. I asked about it, I was ignored. I asked about it again. Then I was fired. Joe Ricci is no friend of labor, and you know it."

"Did you deal with Joe personally?" I asked. "My walking papers came from one of his henchmen," he said. "But it was a directive from him. I know how he operates."

"Well, I don't think it's fair of you to judge him based solely upon your experience at one of his businesses years ago," I observed. "You even admit, you didn't deal directly with him. It seems you have a personal vendetta, and you're costing your union a lot of money with your vengeance. I mean, look, he's trying to help you guys. Doesn't that demonstrate something?"

"Yeah," Dudley answered toughly. "It demonstrates he's now running for governor. Let me tell you something. I know about that guy. And I'm not alone. Look, I don't want to argue! We took a vote, we met with our lawyers, and we don't want to be associated with the concert. Now that's it! Bye."

I called Joe, careful to buffer the blow. I eventually explained that Dudley said he once worked at Elan, and was fired, because he asked for a raise.

“That’s preposterous”, he said. “It’s a maneuver by people who don’t want us to look to good. We’ve got to come out fighting.” Feeling unsettled by Dudley’s remarks I suggested we research his experience at Elan and get the real story about his firing.

“That guy is an instigator, a paid pawn,” Joe responded. “Tierney’s people put him up to it. Did you know that the union’s law firm is the one Tierney used to work for before he became the state’s top cop? I’ll get the guy checked out, he promised. “But meanwhile we need to put a full-page ad in this week’s Sunday paper, letting everyone know what happened, how we were victimized by all of this. What are our actual damages ? How much money are we in the hole for?”

I said I hadn’t signed any contracts yet, and that Dan and my time was the most notable loss. “Well, don’t tell them that. We’ve got to use this new twist to our advantage,” he replied.

In the September 29, 1985, issue of *the Maine Sunday Telegram*, the following full-page letter appeared as a paid advertisement

#### *POLITICS AS USUAL...*

*It was to have been a statewide celebration supporting Maine workers - an autumn afternoon of magnetism and music with performances by many Maine musicians along with nationally known singer Tom Rush, to benefit B.I.W. Local 6 union. The date was set for Sunday, October 5, three months into the lingering strike by B.I.W. shipbuilders.*

*We at Scarborough Downs had offered to sponsor this concert as a demonstration of our support for the 4,500 families affected by the strike, who are facing winter with high heating bills and a depleted strike fund.*

*Local 6 union president, Ray Ladd, offered unequivocal support and gratitude for this benefit. Performers’ schedules were set. Staging was being constructed, sound and light technical developed, and the Ticketron programming online. TV, radio, and print ads being produced, and media buys made Scarborough Downs’ personnel were eagerly working on the ‘extra’ additions to this afternoon extravaganza on its infield such as a chicken barbecue, and hayrides, when the call came from Milt Dudley, strike coordinator for the local 6 union, just 12 days before the benefit.*

*"We've had a meeting this morning with our union lawyers and decided we don't want to be associated with your benefit", Dudley declared to the Scarborough Downs employee who had spent many hours coordinating this event.*

*When she indicated that Ray Ladd had already sanctioned the concert and based on this commitment many more commitments had been made Mr. Dudley sputtered: "We (the union) have to be careful about the character of those we are associated with, particularly if that person is a candidate for governor."*

*I am shocked and saddened that the politics of this situation overshadowed the fact that 4,500 families of strikers could have substantially benefited financially and emotionally by a groundswell of support from the people of Maine. It is mind boggling to realize that as much as \$75,000 could have been added to the strike fund because of this concert.*

*I am appalled that my possible gubernatorial bid should put my character in question and make a mockery of my motivation to support Maine shipbuilders who are asking only minimal concessions from a multinational corporation that stands to make \$80 million profit from the construction of two ships.*

*My background testifies to my support of fair working conditions. As a young man economic circumstances forced me to quit school and work in two non-union shops- Modern Tobacco in Port Chester New York, and Arnold Bakeries. I helped organize unions there and witnessed an improvement in the quality of life for workers. A fundamental right of American labor is to unionize, and we need only remember the 'sweat shops' of the early nineteenth century to justify the existence of unions.*

*Although I am angered by the inconsistency in giving support to the strike aid benefit concert and then arbitrarily taking it away, causing great inconvenience to all involved, and considerable personal expense to me, I still staunchly support the rank and file of the local 6 union.*

*Ironically enough the call from Mr. Dudley came the same day B.I.W. management placed full-page advertisements in newspapers throughout the state accusing the union leadership of 'substituting stubborn resistance for thoughtful decision making.' One would think that good faith negotiations with those who*

*support the union would be a given; yet in the instance of the benefit concert, it was not the case...*

*Despite the special interest actions of a few, I urge the people of the state of Maine to rally around the efforts of the local 6 union strikers and send B.I.W. management a message that Maine workers will not tolerate ‘union busting’ tactics.*

*Joseph Ricci, President Scarborough Downs*

I didn't question Ricci's claim that he worked in two non-union shops, where he helped organize unions and witnessed an improvement in the life of the workers. It wasn't until three years later, during a trip to Port Chester, and a conversation with the president of Arnold Bakery's union, that I learned Arnold Bakery had been unionized since the early 1920s, at least twenty-five years before Joe Ricci was born.

That Monday the press was on the phone. A TV crew came out to the track to cover the story regarding the concert's cancellation. Ricci amassed a great deal of publicity, projecting himself as the benevolent victim whose help was refused by the union, because of rival gubernatorial candidates who wanted to 'politicize' his good intentions. "The campaign," he observed, "is off and running, and I came out of the gate way ahead of the others!"

xxx

During the first two weeks of October, I was distracted by a series of demands. Scarborough Downs' assistant general manager, Dan Gearan, was having his wedding reception in the clubhouse dining room. Ricci had offered him the clubhouse, along with the services of his kitchen personnel, giving him the wedding 'at cost.' Dan told me he wanted to install a portable dance floor, but Ricci said no.

"I don't think he realizes it can't hurt anything," Gearan observed. "Maybe you could mention it to him?" he asked. About a week later I casually brought up the subject.

"He's not going to ruin my clubhouse. I already told him no," Ricci stated with a vehemence that surprised me. "Oh," I said. I didn't think you knew that it's just

a temporary installation that Dan wanted to have done at his expense, so they could have traditional bridal dance.”

“Let me tell you something,” he interrupted. “I offered the clubhouse. I’m not making a penny on it. If he doesn’t like it the way it is, he just better shut up or he’ll end up having his reception in a church basement.” Then he warned me in a low eerie tone: “Don’t ever stand in my line of fire.”

Just where Ricci’s line of fire was at any given moment was difficult to determine. When someone disappeared after a brief stint or long tenure, I didn’t speculate. Ricci always justified everything he did.

While I was conducting Scarborough Downs function business in early autumn, I was also in the midst of Ricci’s pending gubernatorial campaign. Dan and I were summoned to frequent meetings on Blackstrap Road, or in the clubhouse conference room, surprised to find only Ricci there with Deanna Atkinson, a secretary at Elan, whom he had recruited to be his personal secretary for the campaign.

“We’ve got to streamline the decision making or we’ll never get anything done,” he told us. He proposed the entire campaign committee meet every two weeks, while Dan and I meet with him every day, working “in the trenches.”

He wanted to hire “a team of crackerjack researchers to uncover every lie.” He said we’ve got to expose waste and mismanagement... get our hands on every statistic to prove we’re heading toward the dumper unless we get a businessman like me in the Blaine House.”

## Chapter Seventeen: Mind Games

Dan complained to me one night: “Joe gives us jobs to do, and then distracts us constantly so we can’t do them.”

Our schedule was crammed with specific tasks, but then Joe would summon us for ‘brainstorming.’ If we said we had a prior commitment, Ricci would determine it wasn’t as important as meeting with him. Then he’d ask for a progress report, and we’d realize all our time had been spent ‘brainstorming.’

I began to worry as I watched my husband scramble to accomplish the near impossible task of pleasing Joe. After Dan spent a week searching for campaign headquarters, as Joe asked him to do, he told him he had leased a building in a shopping plaza, five minutes from his house on Blackstrap Road. He told Dan he did not want to deal with the campaign researchers. But less than two weeks after they were hired, he asked with impatience whether he was ever going to get a chance to meet them.

A week later the three researchers, all women in their mid-twenties with interest in politics, sat at the long table in the track’s conference room ready to make presentations. It was 9:55a.m. and Ricci was expected to walk in the door any minute. But he didn’t arrive until the time the meeting had been scheduled to end.

“Sorry I’m late everyone,” he announced matter of factly. “I had some business emergencies.” Dan introduced the researchers and was about to let them speak about their findings when he was interrupted. “Let me tell you about me and this campaign,???” Joe said beginning with his poverty in Port Chester, and his founding of Elan. He said he helped people for a living, was victimized by the attorney general’s office, and slandered by Key Bank. He briefly summed up his case against the bank, emphasizing the personal torment and near financial ruin it cost him and his family.

Researcher Celeste Cloutier was scarcely a minute into her presentation when Ricci cut her off sharply. “Dan didn’t get it right. I don’t want to hear the bleary beginnings of Joe Brennan’s rise to prominence. I want to find out how he sold out his fellow Democrats for Republican special interests.” (Though then

Governor Brennan was prohibited from running for another term, Ricci wanted to make sure none of his operatives became governor.) Dan attempted to explain, but Ricci interrupted him mid-sentence with a sneer, and then focused his attention on another researcher.

I saw the confusion on his face, then pain, then anger. Papers rustled beside me where Dan was seated, then I heard him, loud and defiant. “I’ve had enough,” he announced rising from his chair to face Ricci who was standing across on the other side of the table. “I’ve got to get out of here,” he continued sounding like he had been exposed to a plague.

I wanted to tell Dan to stay or offer to leave with him. But I sat stoically watching the drama inside the room, as though my husband was just another one of Ricci’s employees about to be history. Then Dan was gone. Ricci blinked at the researchers averting my eyes. “Did I do something?” he asked before he left the room.

I excused myself from the stunned researchers, slipped into my office and closed the door. Dan was waiting inside. “Sorry, I just couldn’t take it any longer,” he said looking traumatized. I wondered if Dan fully understood the implications of his actions. I’d never see anyone explode like that in front of Ricci. Usually, it was Ricci who exploded. Dan’s outburst would be considered defection, betrayal, He would be written off, and probably so too would I.

Dan kept calling him “a son of a bitch.” “Tell him that I just can’t work for someone who plays such cruel mind games. I trusted him, but I’m done,” he declared. I told Dan I understood and suggested he go home and calm down.

I sat at my desk, staring at the thick pack of phone messages that had come in during the day’s marathon meeting. I wanted to purge myself of politics, particularly Joe Ricci’s gubernatorial campaign. I wanted to sleep for days. Yet my adrenaline was pumping wildly.

I expected Ricci to arrive any minute and want to talk about Dan. What could I or should I say? Didn’t he realize how he had treated him? Ten minutes passed, and then fifteen. I heard voices outside my door. Martha whisked by heading towards the clubhouse dining room, where Ricci had begun holding court. Would I be summoned? Then two more employees, a researcher, and John

Campbell all passed by office enroute to commiserate with their boss.

I realized that Joe was not going to call me. Dan and I had already been labeled defectors and were undoubtedly the subject of the discussion at the bar.

My cheeks felt flushed, and my throat was sore. I wanted to leave but I knew if I left, it would be over. Dan and I would be banished from the campaign, and I would lose my job at Scarborough Downs. I gritted my teeth and headed upstairs.

I heard Ricci's voice above the others as I walked through the kitchen and headed toward the bar. Half dozen employees were seated on stools, their backs to me as they faced Joe. Behind them stood Joe Ricci's imposing presence. He was pouring drinks and looked stunned to see me headed his way. I adopted a steely self-confidence as I moved closer. I pretended he was just another bartender as I ordered bourbon on the rocks with a 'this has been a terrible day' lilt in my voice. (I don't drink hard liquor, but it seemed the scene required something different from my usual glass of wine.)

The seats on either side of me were suddenly vacant. Martha, seated two stools away, made a hasty farewell. Deanna Atkinson, and a security guard remained until Ricci asked them to excuse themselves because he had something he needed to discuss with me in private. Deanna had recently assumed the role of his chauffeur, so he told her to come back for him in a half hour.

Ricci placed a brandy snifter half full of bourbon on the bar in front of me and poured himself another hit of vodka. "What are we gonna do about Dan? It can't go on after today."

"We don't have to do anything about him," I began, feeling annoyed by his desire to fire him before Dan got a chance to officially quit.

"I think Dan's departure said it all. He doesn't want to continue working on the campaign. That meeting today was very stressful," I continued, waiting for him to jump in, and give me some indication of where he was coming from. Would he admit that he set out to ambush him? Or would he deny any responsibility for inciting Dan's reaction?

"I guess I expected too much from him," he said, speaking softly. "Well, it's for the best, if you're sure he wants out. You know he was spending time on all the wrong stuff, and everything was overly organized."

"Dan is a different from you," I answered, feeling compelled to defend my husband, without sounding defensive. You might think he's rigid with the meeting agendas, charts etc., but he just wanted to do the best job possible and couldn't deal with your changing the game plan every day. You know you never asked me before you recruited him," I observed. "I could have told you the personalities wouldn't work."

I decided to take smaller sips from my glass. My head was swimming, and I'd be dammed if I lost control of the conversation. We were fencing, and I had to beware of lunges. But then he moved closer to where I was seated, but still on the other side of the bar.

"You know," he began, his voice growing more intimate. "It means a lot that you came up here to talk. Otherwise, it would have been awkward." He poured himself another drink, and offered to replenish my glass. "No thanks," I responded, "I'm going to be driving soon."

"You're cool," he continued with a halfsmile. "You really are. I remember the first time I ever saw you in that crummy office in the grandstand where Martha and I talked to you about advertising. I must admit, I was absolutely astounded when you took the job. You were so perfectly groomed, so proper, and sophisticated. It blew my mind that you'd work here. How long has it been?"

"Nineteen months," I said.

"Look at us now..." he began wistfully. Feeling a pang of resentment, I said. "You really shouldn't be as surprised that I took the job then. You should be surprised I'm still here."

Then Deanna appeared in the doorway, and asked Ricci if he was ready for his ride. It was after 5p.m."Look Deanna," he answered, suddenly business like. Could you give us another half hour?" She disappeared amid my realization that I had to wait another half hour before heading home.

"I didn't know what I was gonna do. It was all so startling to me having Dan

react that way. It was shocking really, and I'm relieved that you and I are not going to have any bad feelings about what transpired. You know I thought I understood Dan. I do that for a living you know, understand people, and help them. But I guess I didn't realize he couldn't take the pressure. Too bad. Are you sure he wants out? Otherwise, it'd be awkward, you know, having to let him go."

I listened to him sound genuinely confused and sincere in his concern for Dan's feelings. I wondered if I hadn't imagined his vindictiveness. But before I could ask him whether he harbored any special resentment toward my husband, he changed the subject and poured himself still another drink.

"You're a good person. I've watched how you treat others. It doesn't matter to you whether it's someone important or a person way beneath you. You respect people. You don't exploit them. When you've been around like I've been around you pick these things up. Instantaneously you zero in, and know a person, understand his or her motivations and weaknesses. I do it all the time at Elan and probably here at the track too. It's natural for me to know people and treat them accordingly."

"How do you treat them accordingly?" I asked, thinking about his often unbalanced scale of justice. "It depends," he answered, with a halfsmile. Then he suddenly became interested in something on my face.

"Look at me," he demanded. "What?" I asked self-consciously, wondering if I had something stuck between my teeth. "Your eyes. What color do you call them?" "Blue." I answered coldly, trying to convey they were not a topic of discussion. "It's like there's a light behind them," he added. "They're luminescent. Very unusual."

"Probably the bourbon," I responded dryly. "No, not at all," he said. "I noticed it this afternoon, in the conference room. I was talking and your eyes, they struck me. It was as if they were back lit." "Well, they're the windows to my soul", "I observed, trying to deflect a mood he seemed to be adopting. "And my soul is full of blinding light," I added with a hint of sarcasm.

At that moment Deanna appeared again at the doorway. He flashed a look of anger in her direction. "Will you be coming soon?" she asked timidly. He was about to answer her, but I interrupted. "I should be on my way," I said, getting

up from the barstool. Ricci nodded in Deanna's direction. "I'll be down," he stated as he walked out from behind the bar that separated us.

That weekend was the first time there were no calls from Joe Ricci. Dan kept wondering aloud what he did to incur his wrath. I told him not to take it personally. But I knew Dan felt like it was the day after a marathon, and he had dropped out of a race he really wanted to win. Dan had known Joe Ricci through me for a year and a half, and then finally met him. In less than a month, he'd become a star sprinter, helping conceive and nurture his campaign. Then kaput, he was just a spectator again. And I was still running.

Dan had already written his resignation letter by the time I walked through the door that Friday night. It said he was sorry that he could no longer work on the campaign because of circumstances beyond his control, but he wished Ricci well and would be rooting for him.

That Monday morning, I went to Scarborough Downs early.

I was having a 9a.m. meeting with a woman who had scheduled an upcoming employee's party at the clubhouse, when I received a call from the receptionist. "Joe wants you to meet him upstairs in the dining room," she announced. I explained I was in the middle of a meeting and asked her to let him know.

Then there was a knock. Before I could answer, the door opened. "I'm sorry," he apologized, looking surprised to see me talking with someone. "I didn't know you were busy." Smiling, he reached his hand out to the woman in my office. "Hi, I'm Joe Ricci," he announced, then turned to me: "When you get a chance, I'd like to see you upstairs. It's important, the sooner the better."

Ricci was seated in the corner of the dining room, sipping coffee and dragging on a cigarette when I arrived ten minutes later. A half-filled coffeepot and a tray of creamers were on the table, along with a fresh cup and saucer placed across from him. He filled my cup as soon as I sat down.

"I'm sorry about the other night at the bar," he began. "I probably said some inappropriate things." I shrugged, assuming he was talking about his comments regarding my eyes. "You know all weekend I thought about the campaign, how we can't lose any more time on research that doesn't prove anything. We've got

to do more full-page ads lambasting Brennan and McKernan and that old guard. We've got to get people aware of what's really going on in this state. I want a weekly radio show where I can take calls. I'll have different guests. It'll be great...Can you arrange it? We'll buy the time. I'm a political candidate so they can't deny me, right? Also, we've got to restructure things. I'm gonna put Deanna in the campaign office full-time and she can learn how to work the computer, and answer phones."

"I want to be at every shindig. I've got Nelson, my pilot ready to fly us anywhere in the state. My plane is my secret weapon. None of those bozos running for governor have a private plane at their disposal. Did you know that I lent my plane to George Bush a few years back, so he could make some stops around the state? Those were my days as a Republican, I didn't know any better," he smiled. "By the way, how did it work out with Dan?"

"He wrote you a letter of resignation. You should get it today. He has no hard feelings." Joe's eyes narrowed. "You know I had to do what I did at that meeting," he revealed, admitting he was responsible for Dan's exit. "I had to, shall we say, force the issue. Everything was getting out of hand. But you know, I really did it for you." "For me?" I asked, incredulous.

"Yeah, Dan was making you nervous. I saw how you began acting the last couple of weeks since he was around. You'd changed. You haven't talked as much, and your spark hasn't been there."

"It's not that Dan has been making me nervous. "I'm exhausted! I finished the season here, and instead of the usual down time to recoup from that frenzy, I began planning the B.I.W. concert, and then the campaign, and recently I took on Gilda's sales and event coordination job, until I can find a replacement. I've been working around the clock."

"Oh," he responded, looking a little annoyed, that I didn't confide that working with my husband was a drag. I felt offended by his remark, considered it another attack upon Dan, but realized if I acted too defensive, he'd think he'd struck a nerve.

I had a persistent cough. My glands were swollen, and all my limbs ached. Late one afternoon at work I was too weak to walk to the parking lot and drive home. I called Dan to meet me. I just wanted a ride home, but he insisted we stop at a walk-in clinic. I ended up submitting myself to a throat culture, blood test, and assorted probes. A half hour later the doctor told me I was walking around with mononucleosis, that I'd better spend the next three to four weeks in bed.

"You should really go on vacation," Joe observed when I told him. "I'll send you on a trip to a warm climate. How about the Bahamas or the Caribbean? I do that for my staff at Elan. It prevents them from getting burned out, rejuvenates them, and makes them better employees." I said I appreciated his generous offer, but I wasn't well enough to go around the block and certainly not to fly to a tropical island.

Three days later Dan drove to Scarborough Downs to drop off a packet of things. I'd been trying to work on at home. Joe was there and invited him to lunch at the nearby Sheraton. During the meal he asked Dan to come back to the campaign. He said he needed him more than ever because of my illness. He told Dan "Beating those sons of bitches depends on us." Dan was reluctant, and so was I but I needed Dan to take some of the pressure off me. Joe had been calling me at home, usually when I was sleeping. He'd ask Dan not to bother me but have me call him when I woke up.

Dan began bringing me the crude makings of full-page ads Joe created. He said Joe wanted me to 'fix them up' which meant a total rewrite. During my three weeks at home, I wrote three full-page advertisements that challenged the Maine political establishment's approach to various issues. The full-page ads: "*Politics as Usual*" drew a lot of attention and mention in the Maine media.

One day in mid-November Ricci told me that Linda had a friend who had a villa in Jamaica where I could go to fully recuperate. He offered to pay plane fare and accommodations. Feeling ravaged from nearly four weeks of a working illness I was tempted by the possibility for privacy, a week to rest, and not think about Joe Ricci's campaign for governor. I accepted his offer, and he had his secretary make arrangements for me to spend Thanksgiving in Montego Bay with Dan and our son Benjamin.

The day before we left, I drove into Portland for the first time in weeks and met

Ricci at a production studio to produce a radio spot for the campaign. It was his first-time doing radio, requiring at least a dozen takes for the 30-second spot.

The next morning, I woke feeling terrible. Dan tried to postpone the trip, yet there were no later flights. I was miserable the entire five hours in the air. The ride from the airport to the villa was memorable only for the number of times we stopped so I could be sick in fields of sugar cane. The next two days I slept while Dan and my son discovered the island beyond my darkened room.

Despite the rocky beginning, the trip was restorative. For the first time in nearly two years, I had a chance to think about something other than work. Sitting under a palm tree I read, and realized I needed to be kinder to my body.

“Perhaps I’ve been brainwashed” I joked to Dan, without realizing the chilling truth. Sleep deprivation, constant communication and isolation from all other interests were brainwashing components, which characterized my life since I met Joe Ricci.

When I returned to work Joe was visibly pleased. “You look great!” he exclaimed. “My campaign has gone nowhere since you and Dan went away. Now we’ve got to make up for all that lost time. During the next six months we’re gonna shake up this state!”

## **Chapter Eighteen: You gotta put it in perspective**

Joe Ricci, the gubernatorial candidate was also Joe Ricci the plaintiff in a much-publicized lawsuit against the state's largest bank. Many people were surprised he was running for governor. They were also surprised he had the financial and emotional resources to do it, given his claims the bank nearly destroyed him.

Perhaps more surprised than anyone were his lawyers.

Dick Poulos cornered me one day when I was at his law office with Ricci. "Could we have a word or two?" he asked, leading me into his private sanctum. "Can you control Joe?" he asked. "You had better or we're in trouble with his lawsuit. This governor stuff," he continued, shaking his head. "If Joe goes around the state mouthing off about all this corruption crap, especially about the attorney general's office, which is part of our suit, he can blow his case."

I told him I couldn't control Joe more than he or anyone else could. "I've had the same conversation with Linda," he explained. "I know who he listens to. If you can just get him to confine the campaign to some newspaper ads, stuff we can review, we'll be better off."

After Joe officially filed his nomination papers he eagerly asked me "Do you think now that I'm running for governor, I can finally get some national news coverage about me and the bank?" I admired his ability to juggle several balls at any given moment but began to realize he was more cunning than I ever imagined.

Just after I returned from my convalescence in early December, he informed me he was planning to file a multi-million-dollar lawsuit against the publishers of local newspapers in Portland, Augusta and Waterville, Maine. Joe had thought some of the previous headlines covering his lawsuit were misleading. He told me his action would be "a preemptive strike" and keep the editors in line during his campaign and upcoming Key Bank trial. "A good offense is the best defense," he remarked. "It's worth a few hours of Dick and John's time to make the paper think twice when they're dealing with me."

A few days after Christmas a twenty-two-page complaint was filed in

Cumberland County Superior Court, citing news stories written by reporters during the past two years were “calculated to harm Joe Ricci’s reputation by holding him up to public ridicule.” It stated that coverage of his case against Key Bank “created confusion for the public and prospective jurors.” It charged that numerous statements in news stories had been made “with knowledge they were false or with reckless disregard of whether they were false or not.” The suit sought \$10.5 million in damages for ‘the intentional infliction of emotional distress, invasion of privacy and breach of contract.’ Ricci was happy. He had another ball in the air, one more coal in the fire.

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On a Saturday night in mid-January Ricci scheduled a belated Christmas party at the Scarborough Downs clubhouse for Elan staffers, and the dozen or so Scarborough employees who were working year-round. He also invited his four campaign researchers, including a woman named Donna who had been hired just two days earlier. The Downs’ Club chef prepared a buffet, and there was an open bar.

Ricci spoke with Dan and me early in the evening, but as the night wore on it was apparent, he was seeking entertainment. He began dancing with secretaries and disappeared without Linda for different lengths of time. Dan and I sipped wine and got into a long conversation with one researcher. Eventually we left to get back home to relieve our son’s sitter.

That Monday morning, while I was sitting at my desk at Scarborough Downs, Dan called from the campaign office, his voice filled with anger. He told me Donna, the campaign’s newest researcher just walked in and gave him her letter of resignation. It stated she decided to resign for personal reasons. She also handed Dan a plastic baggie containing three marijuana cigarettes. “Please give this back to Joe. Tell him I don’t want it. That’s not what I’m about,” she said.

Donna was a petite woman in her early twenties, a single mother of a toddler. She told us she needed the job, since she was recently divorced, and supporting herself and her daughter. She told Dan she had previously had a problem with drugs and didn’t want to deal with it again. She also said she was disillusioned by her personal experience with Joe Ricci.

After speaking with some of the other researchers Dan and I learned that Ricci had invited Donna and a group of four or five others to his apartment in the clubhouse the night of the party, where they smoked marijuana.

We were shocked. How could the owner and therapeutic director of an adolescent treatment center behave this way, especially when he was a candidate for governor, determined to pull the plug on everything that was wrong with everyone else? Did he think he was above reproach? Was he reckless, or just hopelessly arrogant?

Dan wanted me to call Joe. “This is absolutely insane,” he hissed. “Here I am with drugs in my desk drawer at the office of a candidate for governor, and a researcher for that campaign has just resigned because the candidate tried to ply her with dope. You better call him, or I will, and as you know, I won’t be as diplomatic as you.”

Ricci reacted to the news of the incident, which I described to him in a flat tone, devoid of emotion, by asking me where the marijuana was, and then telling me to tell Dan to get rid of it immediately.

“This could be a set-up,” he observed. “Donna could have been an operative for the DEA sent in to infiltrate our campaign. Call me back after you’ve talked to Dan.”

Later that afternoon Joe called to tell me he realized his behavior at the party had been foolish. He said even if nothing came of “the Donna matter” he was going to be as “clean as a whistle” for the rest of the campaign. “We’ve all invested too much in this campaign to let it get destroyed by any of my indiscretions. I really don’t even do that stuff anymore,” he added. “It’s just that the party was kind of a blow-out because I’ve been cooped up all winter. Wouldn’t it be ironic if they got me because of that one isolated instance?”

Dan and I talked at home that night, questioning our continued support for Joe given what we knew. We were disgusted with his behavior, but he had seemed repentant, and probably was scared into not letting anything like that happen again. How could we abandon him? He had given us a trip to Jamaica two months earlier. Didn’t we owe him another chance? Also, I reasoned that if I walked away from the campaign, it probably also would mean forfeiting my

advertising post at Scarborough Downs. We'd have no income. We reluctantly decided to stay and plough ahead.

An unprecedeted period of closeness among the three of us ensued as we traveled around the state of Maine in Ricci's private plane for public appearances. He was full of energy, and to the best of our knowledge, drug free. He was also very solicitous of Dan and me, asking our opinions and stroking our egos, keeping us close.

"I couldn't be doing this without you and Dan," he'd often say to me. Or when the three of us were together, he'd declare, "You two are great."

The rest of the campaign committee was not active, making their presence felt only at the committee meetings scheduled every two weeks, or whenever Ricci got the urge for a larger audience. The exceptions were Martha Amesbury, who computed the campaign payroll and approved all campaign related expenditures, and Linda who occasionally accompanied us on plane trips to outlying areas.

I remember the blur of activity from early morning until late at night. Dan and I would begin work about 8a.m., attending meetings and making calls before Ricci woke up. He'd usually phone us from his bedroom on Blackstrap about noon for an update. He'd work out, lifting weights in his home gym and call us again, sometimes two or three more times, before we had to drive over to his house to accompany him to a political gathering. If the trip was more than two hours by car, he'd insist on taking his plane. Then we'd merely drive from his house to the Portland Jetport ten miles away.

Each time we had an evening engagement either Dan or picked up our son Benjamin at his school in Portland and made the hour trek to our home to meet his sitter. We'd arrive at Ricci's estate frenzied, having had a sub, or some crackers for dinner.

After campaign appearances Ricci usually wanted to stop for a drink. By the time we got him back to Blackstrap Road it was usually after 11p.m., and we'd rush home. We'd be so wound up we couldn't get to sleep until 2a.m. We sandwiched production of radio and television ads between Ricci's varied campaign appearances.

I recall only stolen snatches of family life. Our son Benjamin learned to ride the bike he got for Christmas on Easter Sunday afternoon during the two hours of leisure time Dan and I had before we headed to Portland to prepare the script for that night's radio program. I attended my mother's 75th birthday party 150 miles away in Massachusetts but drove back to Maine the same day. Just thinking about the intensity of that period between January and May of 1986 induces anxiety.

A candidate's night in Millinocket Maine in late January was Joe's first official campaign appearance. All five of the Democratic gubernatorial hopefuls were invited. Millinocket was a three-hour drive from Portland, so Ricci decided he would fly in that evening with Linda just in time for the 7 p.m. dinner. Dan and I were dispatched to drive down to scope things out and drive back to Portland the next day.

We arrived late afternoon, checked into a room in the hotel where the gathering was taking place, and found the small airfield where Nelson, Ricci's pilot, had told us to meet him. Waiting for sight of the plane on the horizon we listened to the local radio station discuss the evening's event. Excitement was in the air.

Ricci had been exuberant earlier, so we weren't prepared for the jittery person who emerged from the plane. The tailwinds had been frightful, and he and Linda had been bounced up and down during the flight. "You two had the right idea," he observed with a tinge of bitterness in his voice. Linda looked pale, wearing a conservative knit suit with a black turtleneck.

We took them to our room to freshen up where our own belongings were still packed in an overnight bag stored in the closet. We had arranged some champagne on ice, crackers, and pate to celebrate later that night.

Ricci took one look at the chilling champagne and asked if we'd mind having a glass then. We toasted the campaign trail "wherever it leads us" and walked down the hall to the gathering.

Later the four of us went back to the room and finished, the champagne while Joe criticized the other candidates for being wimpy. When he finally put his coat on, Dan and I snapped to attention, ready to transport him and Linda back to the plane.

Instead, he asked Dan to drive him to a local liquor store. A half hour later they both returned with Ricci clutching a liter and a half bottle of some bottom shelf wine. He explained every decent store was closed, “so beggars can’t be choosers.” He quickly consumed the entire bottle, pacing around the hotel room while Linda, Dan and I listened to his observations about the other candidates, complete with comic impersonations. It was long after midnight when we dropped them at the plane, and Ricci’s bleary-eyed pilot came out of his waiting area to greet us, so he could fly his boss safely home.

The first week in February gubernatorial candidates were invited to speak at a rotary club luncheon in northern Maine’s Presque Isle, a hundred miles north of Millinocket.

It was Linda’s birthday and she had expressed some ambivalence about attending. I gently encouraged her, commenting that I didn’t want to be the only other woman there. She finally agreed to go, so Dan and I decided it’d be nice to give her a little surprise party on the plane, since the four of us would be flying from Portland.

I ordered a chocolate torte with a personal happy birthday greeting, bought a bottle of champagne, and arranged with Ricci’s pilot to have the champagne on ice, and the cake ready when we returned after the luncheon. Linda was surprised when she stepped on board and saw the tray table set with four fluted glasses and a bucket of bubbly. Ricci was surprised too, and said, “This was very thoughtful of you.” After we were airborne, we toasted Linda, and consumed the torte. The next day Dan and I received a handwritten note from Linda thanking us for our unexpected kindness. I thought nothing more about our gesture until about a week later when I was talking to Ricci about something he had said in Presque Isle.

“You know,” he interrupted me with a strange look in his eye, “I wanted to throw that birthday cake at you that you got for Linda. That whole scene was really a piece of work.” He abruptly changed the subject, while I sat stunned wondering what had offended him. Later I realized he was angry we arranged the surprise with Nelson, his employee. Dan and I had overstepped a boundary. We’d also taken the spotlight from Joe, an almost unforgivable offense.

February heralded the premier of Ricci's radio show called *State Watch*, a paid broadcast at local station WYNZ in Scarborough. The format, modeled after radio call-in shows, began with pre-taped dramatic opening music with a voice over stating:

*"This is State Watch with Joseph Ricci, Democratic candidate for governor talking with Maine guests and accepting calls from YOU. This is YOUR chance to call the candidate and express YOUR concerns, offer YOUR opinions about the state we're in."*

Ricci introduced his studio guest, announced the call-in number, and for the phones lines to light up. During fielding phone calls, his mood ran the gamut from gracious host, and insightful arbiter to savvy cynic and tough talker.

That winter the state of Maine was informed by the U.S. Department of Energy that two sites in Maine were among those being considered for a high-level nuclear waste dump. It was a volatile issue and Ricci, sensing an opportunity to express outrage jumped on the bandwagon.

He invited leaders of the Maine Nuclear Referendum Committee to his radio show to discuss the origin of nuclear waste, its health hazards, and the politics underlying its production. Alva Morrison was the founder of MNRC, which had successfully defeated a statewide voter referendum authorizing storage of low-level nuclear waste. Alan Philbrook, a former nuclear engineer was also active in this organization, which had continued to work for the shutdown of Maine Yankee, a nuclear power plant in Wiscasset, fifty miles north of Portland.

It wasn't until the furor over the possible storage of the nation's high-level waste on Maine land, that many Maine citizens seriously considered calling for a shutdown of its reactor. Ricci showed up at the public hearings held in school auditoriums, and city halls. At one public hearing held in Casco he was surprised to find Maine's congressional delegation and Maine's Governor Brennan in attendance. He glared at Brennan across the room and shouted, "Joe I've been following you for a long time." He charged that Brennan and his "sidekick Tierney" had not legally challenged the D.O.E's authority as the state of Vermont had done. He got more incensed as he spoke. (One press account said he whipped off his scarf like it was a wet towel in a locker room.)

“Our attorney general should be mounting a legal challenge,” he told the crowd. “And if we have to sue on ten legal fronts for twenty years, we should, and if we lose, we can perhaps take a lesson from Mahatma Gandhi and lay down in front of the trucks!” The crowd cheered wildly. Ricci had learned how to incite an audience while creating quotes for the press. He made the news the day after the hearing and loved it.

While the nuclear issue was a major thrust of Ricci’s campaign, there were other dominant themes that punctuated his platform. Chief among these was his avowed concern for women and working people.

In mid-February Marge Clark, state coordinator for the National Organization for Women, appeared as a guest on Ricci’s radio show. Ricci talked about the “abominable conditions” for women in the state of Maine, citing the lack of crisis centers for those who had nowhere to go when they were battered either physically or psychologically. He lamented the lack of economic opportunities for women, noting that there were “some people out there who would like to see them still chewing on buffalo ropes or making moccasins.”

A few weeks later he had two leaders of the striking railroad union at Maine’s Guilford Industries as guests and proclaimed that business in the state of Maine was “engaging in union busting tactics and cared nothing for Maine’s working people.”

Around this same time Ricci granted an in-depth interview to Scott Allen, a reporter for a statewide newspaper, who was compiling profile pieces on all the gubernatorial candidates.

During a two-hour interview at his home Ricci railed against “professional politicians” calling them “a bunch of abusive, greedy, corrupt, power mad morons.” He proclaimed he was a different kind of Democrat “who won’t be bought off and can’t be scared off.”

The paper featured Ricci on the front page wearing a dress shirt and tie and a pair of boxing gloves. *The headline read: “Ricci’s willing to pay the price to put on the gloves with the Democrats.” adding that “the flamboyant Ricci adds spice to an otherwise bland gubernatorial race.”* Allen’s accompanying article portrayed Joe Ricci as a businessman with an anti-corporate philosophy. He

wrote “*Ricci sees himself as an everyman, his problems with government reflections of the average citizens on a grander scale.*”

“I’m a liberal activist Democrat,” he often announced. Few questioned his underlying attitudes towards women. Not a soul asked why he fired Debra Therrien at Scarborough Downs for no apparent reason only two days after touting her position as the country’s first female assistant general manager of a harness racetrack. Nobody probed to discover how a single mother was forced to quit her job as his campaign assistant because she did not want to share drugs with him. Nor did anyone make a fuss over his preference for hiring only slender and attractive women as mutuel cashiers and cocktail waitresses.

Hearing of his pro-choice stance regarding reproduction, nobody remembered during a newspaper interview years earlier he had said flatly that “abortion is murder, no matter what.”

Did anyone contemplate the champion of working people’s’ batting record with his own employees at Scarborough Downs and Elan?

How many had been fired, for no cause, and left out on a limb with no income or health care coverage? Why was Scarborough Downs one of the few tracks without unionized mutuel sellers?

The more I listened to Ricci as I sat beside him in the tiny broadcast booth during his weekly radio shows, and at his dining room table on Blackstrap Road, the more I wanted to believe that he was the person he projected. I wanted to help direct the campaign of a candidate who really cared about women’s issues, fair working conditions, poverty, healthcare, and the environment, but I wondered if such a politician existed.

Yet, I still didn’t realize then that Ricci was the antithesis of who he claimed to be. If I had been more aware, perhaps less exhausted, perhaps I could have detected the hollow mimicry of emotion, the genuine lack of empathy, the inability to experience guilt.

The closest I came to realizing Joe Ricci’s total insensitivity came on the bitterly cold morning of January 28, 1986. He called me at Scarborough Downs, his television blaring in the background.

He was talking about a campaign ad when he suddenly seemed distracted. “Wow!” he exclaimed. “The space shuttle just blew up.”

“God! Was anyone in it?” I asked.

“Yeah. All of them, all blown up. Wait. They’re doing an instant replay,” he responded, as though he were watching a ball game.

I felt sick, shocked. “What happened?” I don’t know. I’ll go check it out and call you back if you want.” Minutes later all of us working at the track gathered to watch the television in the reception area, aghast at what happened. Then Ricci called me back, his voice was calm. “Did you see the TV?”

I expressed my horror and expected the commiseration that usually happens between people in times of public tragedy. But he seemed annoyed “I don’t know why everyone’s so upset,” he observed. “So, six astronauts and a high school teacher get blown up in a rocket trying to get to space. What about the marines who were just killed in Lebanon? You gotta put it in perspective.”

## Chapter Nineteen: The *60 Minutes* Interview

The Maine Innkeepers Association scheduled its luncheon during the last week of February. All gubernatorial hopefuls had been invited to explain plans to increase tourism in Maine. Ricci felt confident about that event because he was the only candidate who ran a seasonal business and could identify with the concerns of the hospitality industry.

Large round tables were set up in the dining room of a Ramada Inn. Campaign staffers were to sit together. Joe didn't like breaking up his entourage. He excused himself from lunch and went to the lobby for a cigarette. Ten minutes later, as I was stabbing a piece of iceberg lettuce with my fork, someone handed me a slip of paper with scrawled letters: "Call Father Bob at Elan. Very important."

Father Bob's voice usually timid, was exuberant. "Joe has got to call this guy at *60 Minutes*, he announced. "He might be interested in doing a story about Joe and his battle with the bank. He called just fifteen minutes ago. His name is Allan Maraynes. He's a producer. He asked for Gerry Davidson and when Gerry's not in I usually get the calls about admission, the program and the like. So, I answered the phone, and it seems this guy Maraynes had been looking through the magazine *Manhattan Inc.* and came across the ad you placed for Elan. He thought it was interesting and said he might want to do a story about this place. I told him the real story here was about Joe Ricci, and briefly detailed the rumor about Joe being in the Mafia, and how his credit got cut off. I mentioned his four-year legal battle, and how he can't get his day in court. He said it sounded fascinating and wants to talk to Joe as soon as possible because he's planning to start filming new segments soon.

He gave me Allan Maraynes's number at CBS in New York and asked me to explain it all to Joe. who was across the lobby, taking Bogart like drags on a cigarette. He looked surprised, pleased, and then paranoid.

"You call this Maraynes and check him out. Maybe it's a set up. He could be trying to annihilate Elan. Be careful."

I spoke with Allan Maraynes, elaborating on the basic information the priest had

given him. “How articulate is Joe?” he asked “Is he charismatic? How will he come across on camera?” Maraynes appeared pleased to learn that Joe Ricci was young, good looking, charming, quotable – and running for governor.

I told him Joe Ricci was the embodiment of the American rags to riches dream, until the bank intervened, and nearly ruined his life (I had heard the spiel so many times it was on a permanent reel in my mind ready to be played at any time.) I also pointed out that I had sent information concerning his saga to another *60 Minutes* producer months earlier.

Can I speak directly with Joe, he asked. I said I’d try to have him call about 3p.m. when he’d be finished with his present campaign stop.

An hour later Ricci was pacing around the dark paneled study off his living room on Blackstrap phone in one hand, cigarette in the other. He talked to Maraynes about his crucifixion by bankers who wanted nothing more than to destroy him. He talked about his humble roots, Elan, and Scarborough Downs, which, he said he bought as a diversion from the stressors of helping children at Elan. He mentioned how his sons had been taunted at school, and how his relationship with them had been destroyed because of the bank’s insidiousness. Dan and I sat on a nearby sofa listening, and watching Joe make gestures with his eyes and fingers to show us how the conversation was going.

Finally, before hanging up, Ricci told Maraynes “People need to know about these injustices those in power perpetrate. It could happen to them, probably does every day only they don’t have the resources to fight back. That’s why I’ve been driven to run for governor, to make a statement about the corruption and injustice. If you want to do a story it’d be great. You can come down here and see everything. My life’s an open book. I have nothing to hide.”

Joe agreed to go to the CBS offices in New York later that week to meet Maraynes and bring documentation about the lawsuit. A big fish had bitten. He summoned other employees to his house and opened bottles of wine. He was ready to party. Linda had already left for her month-long trip to her parents’ retirement residence in Florida. But female companionship wasn’t lacking when Alice Quinn walked in.

Quinn began working for Elan in 1982 after graduating from Providence College

in Rhode Island with a degree in social work. She had been working as a waitress at an inn in her hometown of Warwick. Though she had no professional experience with adolescents prior to her arrival at Elan, she quickly became senior director, earning a salary in excess of \$35,000.

I hadn't expected her to look like a 1960s version of chic Linda Smeaton. She had long straight blond hair, but it was not a modern cut. Dressed in corduroys and a simple shirt, she wore little makeup and looked uncomfortable in her own skin, a sharp contrast to the acutely self-possessed Linda. Shortly after arriving that afternoon, she began confiding in me while Ricci was out of the room.

"Joe and I have a personal relationship. Linda understands all about us," she told me in staccato sentences. She confessed she didn't know where her coupling with Joe Ricci was headed. For a year she had been trying to get him to accompany her to Rhode Island to meet her parents, but he kept putting her off. She talked incessantly and seemed quite on edge. I was surprised by her demeanor and wondered how she could wield so much power at Elan.

Dan and I excused ourselves as more people began arriving. That night was one of the rare occasions when there had been no campaign appearances and we'd planned to spend the evening with our son. Ricci walked us to the door, reaching out to embrace both of us with a bear hug.

"I hope everything works out in New York," I said. "You're coming with me to make sure it does," he said smiling as he closed the door.

That Friday morning, I boarded Ricci's private plane for a flight to LaGuardia along with John Campbell, and Father Bob. He had assembled an impressive entourage designed to persuade *60 Minutes* to do his story. Campbell carried a bulging briefcase containing court documents including secret interdepartmental memos from the bank that would illustrate how victimized his client had been. Father Bob was there to certify the purity of his employer's soul, and I to translate and talk TV terms. In New York we were met by a chauffeured limousine Ricci had hired and whisked to the headquarters of CBS News on West 57th Street.

When we arrived at the suite of *60 Minutes* offices the oversized iconic clock loomed in front of us in the reception area. A staff cameraman greeted us,

declaring he loved Maine and was building a retirement home there. Yet he said was concerned about the U.S. Department of Energy using Maine for a hazardous waste site. Ricci told him that the public only knew half of what happened in the state and offered to send him information concerning the D.O.E. hearings he had attended. The guy seemed grateful and gave Ricci his home address, before he took us down the narrow carpeted hallway to a tiny office.

Enroute, we observed other small offices to the right, the left wall devoted to framed photographs and other *60 Minutes* memorabilia. We passed by Andy Rooney and Morley Safer's offices before we came upon Allan Maraynes on the phone with his door open.

There was only one couch, and a coffee table crammed with magazines beside Maraynes' messy desk. He suggested we all go to lunch in the CBS cafe, which he said had good food, and quick service.

In the dimly lit pub style restaurant Ricci ordered a drink. Maraynes, dressed casually, wearing sneakers, a dark sports shirt, and pants, talked quickly and often interrupted us mid-sentence, either with a question, or a new thought of his own. But his New York style didn't bother the kid from Port Chester.

John outlined the civil suit against the bank, while Joe presented a graphic emotional account of all he'd been through during the past four years. "After spending nearly a \$1 million in legal fees I still do not have a trial date, and I wonder if I'll ever get to court," he declared. His diatribe against the bank prompted Maraynes to conclude that Ricci could have been a character in Kafka's book, "*The Trial*" in which an innocent person was put through years of torture.

Maraynes seemed unimpressed with Ricci's claim of "near financial ruin" noting that it couldn't have been too bad considering he flew to New York in his own plane. "I don't know very many people who can do that," he observed.

Maraynes said he wanted to pursue the story and was almost sure he could shoot it in April but had to clear it with a few people. He promised to let us know the following week so he could schedule a preliminary visit to Maine. He explained that each of the *60 Minutes* producers worked with different 'talent' on a rotating basis, and that he was then working with Ed Bradley who would be

interviewing Joe. Just before saying goodbye, Maraynes asked Joe to give him the movie rights to his story, observing it would “play well in Hollywood.”

Waiting for the limo to take us back to the plane, the four of us were jubilant. Ricci declared, “This is all I’ve ever wanted, to have something like *60 Minutes* draw attention to the torture I’ve been put through. If I lose my lawsuit now, it doesn’t matter. This will be worth it all. But if I do win,” he said. “I’m gonna share my good fortune with everyone who helped me during all of this. You know what I’m gonna do? I’m gonna give people close to me suitcases full of money.”

“Well let’s not get carried away,” I responded laughing. “No, I’m not kidding, he said. “If I win millions of dollars from the bank, I can pay off my legal fees, and the Scarborough Downs mortgage. What more do I want? Money is to share, and when I win, I’m going to give away suitcases full of hundred-dollar bills to my friends.”

## **Chapter Twenty: Ya think I'm gonna breakdown?**

Though Ricci had been running for governor since October, he hadn't yet made his formal announcement. Three of the five candidates had launched their campaigns during the end of February. Joe decided he would have his moment in early March. He decided to do it at the American Legion Hall in Wiscasset after we determined it would be impossible to declare his candidacy in front of the fence around the nuclear power plant in that town.

We booked the hall for March 6 and rented a podium and sound system, ordered refreshments, and mobilized volunteers. Joe, energized from our trip to CBS in New York a week earlier, promised to "knock them dead" with his announcement speech.

I hired a professional production crew to tape the announcement, so we could use excerpts for tv ads. Everything was ready, except for Joe's speech, which I suggested he and I work on together. He kept putting it off, and finally scheduled a few hours the afternoon before the event for us to "hammer it out" at his house.

But he seemed unable to concentrate. Then there was a knock on the door. In came Alice Quinn. She sat quietly for a few minutes, then mentioned she had some problems at Elan she needed to discuss. Ricci dismissed me, giving me the charge to write the speech that night. "You know what I want to say," he declared. He promised he'd work on some points of his own and weave them into what I wrote.

"You know me, the master of improv," he said, trying to put me at ease. I pointed out that it was customary to have a text of the speech as handouts for the press, and everything would have to be finished and copied before his press conference scheduled for 11a.m. the next day. "It'll be fine." he promised. "Just do your version, and we can give them that." I reluctantly agreed. "I'll call you tonight, and we can go over it," he promised.

That night Dan and I labored over the text. It was a call to arms for disillusioned Democrats who wanted their party to get back to practicing its fundamental principles. It talked about how some elected officials cater to special interests trading favors with friends, and how big business lobbyists care nothing about

the rights of working people. It focused on an eroding economy, an endangered environment, and violations of civil rights because of politicians who put a price tag on everything.

The speech was intense, but with a strong slant for positive change. It was near midnight when we finished and realized Ricci hadn't called. I dialed his number, anxious to read the speech to him, but his phone kept ringing. I decided he must have gone to sleep, so we went to bed, too tired to think anymore.

Six hours later we were up. Dan took our son to school in Portland and from there made the hour trip to Wiscasset to supervise set-up for the announcement rally. He had already organized a contingent of volunteers to put up the Ricci for governor signs along the roadway leading to the American Legion. Dan and volunteers decorated the hall with balloons and banners and laid out campaign materials. I made copies of the speech to add to the press packets before to take him to Wiscasset.

I arrived at Blackstrap Road a little after 9a.m. Ann, the housekeeper greeted me. "He's not up yet," she said, offering coffee. I asked her whether he was awake. She told me she just arrived a few moments before I did, but he probably would be down shortly, if he expected me. I sipped coffee, reread the speech twice, and Joe still had not appeared. It was 9:30 a.m. and I was anxious.

"Can you check on him?" I asked. A couple of minutes later she came down. "He seems to be getting ready," she said. Breathing a sigh of relief I waited a few minutes longer, expecting to see a spiffy figure stride into the room at any moment. Instead, I heard what sounded like a whisper. I listened and heard it again. It was somebody calling my name. I moved closer toward the sound and realized it was Ricci calling me from the second floor.

He was standing, unshaven, in a bathrobe. He walked down to the first landing and began crying. "What's the matter?" I asked, my heart racing.

"I don't know," he answered. his voice barely audible through the sobs. "My whole life nobody's ever cared about me." I placed by hand on his arm and told him it was not the time to freak out, that he had to pull himself together, so we could get to Wiscasset.

"I know," he continued, mustering some control. "Things will look better later. It's just that Alice and I stayed up all night doing cocaine, and drinking. I guess I gotta wash my face, and get ready," he said turning back up the stairs.

Stunned, I went back to the dining room table.

"More coffee?" Ann asked in a cheery tone. I must have looked ashen because she asked me if everything was all right. "Yeah, Joe's just got some pre-speech jitters."

"Oh," she remarked as she fidgeted with the vacuum cleaner. "I thought there might be a problem. You know you see things around here, especially when I'm the first one in after an evening, but I don't like to poke my nose into things," she continued her voice trailing off. "What Joe does is his business," she quickly added.

I had to control my anger. It was the first time Joe Ricci ever admitted he used cocaine, though I'd certainly heard the rumors. But this was significant. It was crazy to use that stuff, especially on the eve of his campaign kickoff. What was he thinking? And what about Alice? Though she wasn't involved in the campaign she certainly had to know how important that day was for him.

We had to get to Wiscasset by 11a.m. for the announcement before the statewide media, and through the next hour after that.

Ricci walked into the dining room fifteen minutes later, shaven and dressed in a suit with the tie dangling loosely around his neck. His shoes were in his hands, and as he put them on, asked me how long it took to get to Wiscasset. Ann appeared with a mug of coffee. He took two sips and said, "Let's go!"

I headed for my Honda, but he suggested we take his Mercedes. "It's faster," he said, tossing me the keys. I had only driven the car once almost two years earlier, so I was flustered having to navigate it over unfamiliar territory. Driving along the treacherous Falmouth back roads to the turnpike he directed me to suddenly take a turn I hadn't planned. "I need to get a pack of cigarettes," he announced as a small variety store came into view. Three minutes later he sprinted out of the store, cigarettes in one hand, a can of beer in the other.

Stopping directly in front of my window he surveyed me in the driver's seat, and announced, "You really look good with this car. It goes with you." "This car

goes with anything,” I observed irritably as he hopped in his side and pulled the lid on his can of Millers. He knotted his tie as I bolted along the highway. The clock on the dashboard read 10:50. In ten minutes gubernatorial candidate Joseph J Ricci was supposed to meet the press and we were almost an hour away.

“So how do I look?” he asked, his tie finally in place. I glanced at him briefly, observing his pallor and red rimmed eyes, the skin on his cheeks hanging loose, the tiny bluish blood vessels near his temples. His designer suit didn’t compensate for the ravages of self-abuse. “Great,” I lied. He laughed, his I know you’re zoomin’ me laugh, and said “You’re alright You know that. I really love you.”

Then looking more serious, he said, “You know it meant a lot that you didn’t get repulsed when I was all fucked up back at my house. I appreciate it.”

“Well, let’s just make the best of a really rocky start,” I stated, directing him to a copy of the speech I had written the night before. He picked it up anxiously and read it through. “It’s absolutely brilliant,” he announced. “I didn’t have anything,” he confessed a bit sheepishly, getting out a pen where he made some markings for emphasis. “I’ll just read this exactly the way it is,” he promised. “Then I’ll take some questions from the veritable members of our Maine media and hope to do what I overlooked last night-sleep!”

Driving nearly 90 miles per hour I made it to the picturesque town of Wiscasset by 11:30a.m. “We’re just a half hour late,” Joe remarked. “And we know they’re not gonna start without me.”

Burgundy and white “Ricci for Governor” signs punctuated the road leading to the legion hall. He whistled, commenting that they looked “dramatic.” When we approached the hall, he unfastened his seat belt, and suggested he go in first. He instructed me to park in an inconspicuous spot, “so everyone won’t see my car.”

Inside the hall large bouquets of burgundy balloons emblazoned with white letters *“Joe Ricci: An Independent Democrat Fighting for the People”* floated through the crowd of about 100 well-wishers. Dan had done an amazing job preparing the hall. It looked wonderful.

Camera crews from the state's three television stations had set up their equipment, with their nightly news anchors positioned nearby. Radio reporters, and newspaper people were also waiting for the tardy candidate.

Ricci walked in the small door in the back of the hall, and just as the audience became apprised of his arrival, he disappeared quickly into the bathroom, emerging a few moments later. Then striding somberly up to the stage, he seemed ready to address his audience.

He looked at the script and began reading.

*"Thank you for coming here today. I'm not going to give you a monotonous monologue of political platitudes...He stopped on the verge of choking, coughing.*

"Sorry," he said, as he reached for a paper cup of water, knocked it over and spilled it on the speech. "I'll start over," he announced.

*"It's such a good speech I want to start again...I'm not going to give you a monotonous monologue of political platitudes. I simply want to tell you what's wrong with this state and how I believe we can change it. If you've spent anytime surveying the political scene, you're probably tired of hearing the usual rah rah speeches from other gubernatorial candidates."*

His delivery was heavier than lead, every word labored. There was no life in his voice or his eyes. The man whom I'd seen charm a crowd could have been reading a technical manual. I hoped he'd get into gear. I moved from the back and took a chair in the fifth row in front of the podium.

But then he flung the speech aside, and said irritably:

"I'm not good at reading speeches. I'm not a professional politician. I'll just tell you what I stand for. It's a good speech though, and I think Maura Curley, the one who wrote it, should come up here and read it."

All eyes in the room followed Ricci's finger, pointing at me. Silence in the hall. I shook my head declining, trying desperately to conceal my horror at what he was doing. "No?" he asked me from the podium.

"Well then I'll tell you what I stand for," he began, looking into the television

cameras.

“First of all, I don’t want to be nobody’s governor. I’m just touched that you all showed up here today. I’ve got better things to do than be governor. If I don’t get elected, big deal. I’m not Joe Brennan. I know who I am. But if I’m elected, I’ll serve...”

“There’s so much wrong, I just want to stop it, but I don’t know where to start. That’s what this campaign is all about, stopping the madness. I’m going to try and change things, and make it rational...”

I couldn’t bear to watch. I went to the back of the room looking for Dan. Our eyes met earlier when I rushed in behind Ricci. Dan was in the back of the hall, looking dazed and pale. Two people, Alan Philbrook of Nuclear Referendum Committee, and Eric Moynihan were nearby. Eric had brought his wife and two of his children to that ‘historic occasion’ thinking it was going to be a gala family event.

“What’s happened to Joe?” Eric asked. “He’s sick,” I said, and walked closer to Dan who had been battling the flu the whole week, working despite it to get everything ready for that day. “I can’t believe what that son of a bitch is doing. He better not talk to me,” Dan exclaimed, and then headed for the men’s room where his stomach voiced a revolt of its own.

Feeling the chill of certain defeat, I was calm, if not philosophical. “Get out of here,” I urged Dan. “Let’s both go. I’m finished with this asshole,” he replied. “I would if I could, but I’m driving his car,” I declared.

I wanted to yell fire or something to end the horror. I half expected the press to just pack up and leave, dismissing him as one of those loonies that rages on in public parks to anyone who’d listen.

Then abruptly Ricci seemed bored or fed up and stormed off the stage. An anchor for one of the TV stations approached him and asked whether he’d be willing to take some questions from the media since he had originally said he was going to do that after his ‘speech’.

“Hell, why not?” Joe responded and headed back up to the podium.

“Think you can beat Jim Tierney in the primary?” one reported queried.

“He violates peoples civil rights. I’ve been abused. I think I can beat him cuz he’s got no guts. He’s also a liar and I’ll tell you he should be suing the DOE, but he’s too busy playing puppet to Joe Brennan, and everybody knows who he works for.” His eyes were angry, darting wildly about the room.

“Is your candidacy making a difference? Do you think people are listening?”

“I think I’ve been censored. I’m running to be a voice that’s heard, not necessarily a winner, but a voice. It’s the only way I can get a forum without being censored.”

Then an anchor for the six o’clock news, a mild-mannered seasoned station veteran asked, “You think you’ll make it?” Ricci glared at him, eyes blazing like fireballs.

“What the hell kinda question is that?”

‘Will I make it?’ Whatta ya think I’m gonna do breakdown in front of all of you? Self-destruct? You people and Jim Tierney are just waiting for that to happen. It figures!”

He walked off the stage, calling one of the campaign researchers to come up to answer anything else. As Ricci stepped into the aisle, Sharon Terry, the executive director of Elan, approached him and exclaimed: “Joe you were just great, marvelous!”

I couldn’t avoid his eyes as he walked towards me. My face felt purple from tension. “How’d I do?” he asked. “I’ve seen better,” I replied, searching for more words, but he walked away.

Five minutes later Ricci sent someone to tell me he was riding home in Sharon’s car. I was instructed to follow them back to Blackstrap Road in his Mercedes.

## **Chapter Twenty-One: Trust the national press?**

After Wiscasset I tried to justify my role in Joe's campaign.

I reasoned that after the Democratic primary I would be able to concentrate on my work at Scarborough Downs. If I quit the campaign, I'd lose my job at Scarborough Downs. I also felt obligated to see the *60 Minutes* shoot to completion. So, I stayed, when I should have walked away.

Six days after the Wiscasset debacle Allan Maraynes flew to Maine to do his advance work. Ricci asked me to get to Blackstrap Road about 7p.m., the time John Campbell and Allan Maraynes were expected.

The house was dark when I arrived and waited outside for about five minutes before Alice Quinn appeared to let me in. She looked harried. "Joe and I are in the basement, finishing a therapy group," she explained. "We'll be up soon. Joe says to make yourself at home. There's wine, juice, and sparkling water in the fridge."

I wasn't accustomed to the house at night and went to the kitchen lit by only a light on the top of the stove. Reaching into one of the overhead cabinets I found a glass and poured myself some Poland Spring water. I went into the dining room, noticing the moon, which illuminated the patio and the pool beyond the wide expanse of glass.

Alice's voice startled me a few minutes later when she entered carrying a tray full of mostly empty wine glasses. "Joe wants you to answer the door when Allan arrives," she announced. "Call us if we're not ready," she added, setting the tray in the sink.

Motioning toward the wine glasses she explained, "I just wanted to bring these up before he gets here, cuz he might get the wrong impression, you know us letting the kids have wine. I think some of them might even be underage. That's all we need for a scandal on *60 Minutes*," she laughed, adding "Actually it's not what it seems. This group is full of re-entry kids, and it's kind of a special treat for them to have some wine. It relaxes them and makes them feel grown-up."

Ten minutes later Maraynes arrived with John Campbell. Alice Quinn, and six

teenagers filed into the foyer. Ricci simultaneously greeted his guests and bade farewell to the kids. While ushering Maraynes into his living room, he said he had just finished an exhaustive group therapy session that was “very rewarding.” I thought it odd that Ricci had chosen the night of Maraynes’s visit to have a group of Elan teens in his home when, to the best of my knowledge he hadn’t led a therapy group since he began campaigning for governor. Ricci observed a couple of days earlier that Maraynes might think his rambling white house was “too ostentatious.” Perhaps the therapy session on Blackstrap Road was to show he opened his home to the residents at Elan.

Maraynes stayed for about an hour. In the short time since our meeting in New York he had done his homework, contacting some of the crucial figures at the bank, to ask if they’d be willing to appear on camera. He remarked how paranoid they seemed. He discussed other aspects of Ricci’s lawsuit and was interested in exploring allegations of harassment at the Maine attorney general’s office.

Maraynes said that he was going to produce a dynamite feature about how one innocent guy could have all this happen to him, just because he broke a few Maine stereotypes.

Before leaving that night, he confirmed his arrangements to visit Elan the next day, talk to a few residents, and then look at Scarborough Downs. He wanted to nail down all the location shots prior to recording Ed Bradley’s interview with Joe Ricci the following month.

“What a coup! What a coup!” Ricci rejoiced, taking great pleasure in how he was going to stick it to everybody with a little help from his new-found friends at *60 Minutes*.

xxx

Ricci believed that his performance in Wiscasset wasn’t really that bad, partly because the press had been kind to him. They only said he “seemed uncomfortable” speaking in front of the crowd. But I felt wary accompanying him to any more speaking engagements.

Yet in March, the political pace quickened, and there were more candidate events. Ricci promised to be great. He charmed a group of about fifty York

County Democrats in Stanford, Maine. “I’m vindicated,” he beamed afterwards without realizing that he blew the big event that really mattered.

A week later I drove him fifty miles to Augusta for a meeting of Kennebec County Democrats. That night in Augusta he acted rational, calm, and friendly as he spoke to some of the most elite members of the party at the offices of the State Democratic Committee. He was aware that his criticism of the party might be challenged, so he was diplomatic and on guard, even when a member of the audience, a veteran employee of Key Bank, angrily accused him of running for governor just to draw attention to his lawsuit against the bank.

Afterwards Ricci suggested we have dinner before making the trek back to Portland. I readily agreed realizing that I hadn’t eaten a thing since breakfast. During a meal at the Senator Inn, he ordered himself about four glasses of wine and deviated from the usual campaign talk. He told me he had to marry his ex-wife Sherry, because she was rich, got pregnant, and he didn’t want her parents putting a shotgun to his head. But life had played a bitter joke because after the wedding she miscarried, and then hurriedly got pregnant again, so he was trapped.

He said she was a very weird woman who used to wear turbans. (Joe’s ex-wife said she never had a miscarriage and did not get pregnant until nearly seven years after she and Ricci were married.)

Later as I drove home, nervously navigating through heavy patches of fog, Ricci sank down in the passenger’s seat and lit himself what he called a ‘New York Joint,’ which I learned was his regular Merit cigarette with the enhancement of a drug. Oblivious to the driving conditions I was enduring he puffed away, commenting that he felt he knew me from a previous life, that we understood each other. I wished Dan was with me, but he was home with our son who had been missing us.

The following week I renewed my contract for one more year “*to provide advertising and public relations services for Scarborough Downs*” increasing my earnings an additional \$12,000.

Ricci wanted new TV and radio ads to saturate the airwaves before the Democratic primary. I felt pressed to write, shoot, and edit these. Scarborough

Downs opening season was approaching, and I had to produce racing promotions as well.

During the last week in March, I scheduled production at Joe's house for the first in a series of campaign spots. A cameraman and director were set to arrive at 1p.m.

I got to Blackstrap Road just before noon. Ricci answered his door, wearing a football shirt and jeans, unshaven. His face looked bloated, and his eyelids swollen. "It was a tough night," he said, responding to the look of disbelief on my face.

Dragging on his cigarette, he gestured me to come in. "I can wash my face, shave, get into a suit and put on a Howdy Doody smile really quick," he promised, then asked, "I don't look that bad, do I?"

We talked for a few minutes about something else, while I was trying to assess the situation. He looked horrible. "Can we reschedule?" he suddenly queried. "Could we do this tomorrow instead?" I patiently explained the shoot had been booked three weeks in advance, and there was no guarantee when I could get another slot. "It' will still cost us for today," I added, not certain what the best course of action was. "Then again," I observed, "Why expend energy and expense for the shooting of an ad that's going to be awful?"

"I won't be awful. I'll be great," Ricci suddenly promised. "Just tell me what I should wear," he demanded, directing me to follow him upstairs to his bedroom.

Opening a wall length closet displaying dozens of suits, shirts, and ties, he said, "Pick out something that'll look great on camera." I pointed to a dark suit, a white shirt, and rather conservative silk tie, but he seemed perplexed. "Well, it doesn't say they go together," he stated bewildering me, before I realized that every piece of clothing in his closet had an index card attached to its hanger, identifying what ties, shirt, and suit could be coordinated with it. I was amazed by this rigidity in the closet of someone who refused to be regimented.

After his clothing was set, he suggested I go out, have lunch, and come back the same time as the camera crew. "I promise you'll be amazed at the change in me," he declared.

When I arrived with the production crew Ricci looked the part and assumed an actor's role. Having never done a tv ad before, he was impatient. I was glad I'd hired a director, rather than direct the spot myself. After about four hours we got the 30-second spot.

The scene opened with him sitting at his desk, in his paneled library addressing the camera, then rising from the desk walking around it, with his tie loosened as if he'd been at a tough day of work.

*"Hi I'm Joseph Ricci, Democratic candidate for governor. I'm not a professional politician I'm a successful businessman who sees a great deal wrong in our state. I'm concerned that big business special interests are eroding our economy, and destroying our environment, and feel that we must stop ignoring the needs of working men and women. I want to close the gap between the rich and poor, the north and south, and know I can because I'm a Democrat determined that the party of working people works for you."*

Reciting the last words he adlibbed a Kennedyesque gesture with his index finger and thumb of his right hand, pointing to the viewer at home. It worked, and when the ad was edited, and aired Joe's shadowy face and circled eyes didn't look like the aftermath of a tough night. Instead, he exhibited an aura of a 'respectable tiredness' from dedication to his job.

During the last week in March Linda Smeaton came back from Florida. I hoped Ricci's tough nights would be over. She seemed to be a leveling influence in his life, so I was relieved that she'd arrive before the *60 Minutes* crew.

Nevertheless, Ricci's behavior became bizarre.

Out of the blue he called and told me he was worried that *60 Minutes* could be a hired gun, sent by the powers in Washington D.C. He said they wanted to discredit him for his anti-nuclear stance, because he singlehandedly was disrupting a multi-billion-dollar industry. He feared the feature was not going to focus on his problems with the bank as Allan Maraynes had indicated but was going to be "a hatchet job on Elan."

I understood the stress he was feeling, anticipating going on national television, telling his story to 62 million households, but I didn't buy his theory. I told him

so repeatedly.

I explained it was extremely unlikely that Maraynes would have gone to such extraordinary lengths to deceive us all about the content of his segment. I mentioned he had already talked to Key Bank and been in touch with John Campbell and me several times with questions that did not support the hatchet job theory.

But he became more convinced *60 Minutes* was gunning for him, and told his partner Gerry Davidson, that the feature could signal the end of Elan. Davidson told him it'd take more than *60 Minutes* to destroy Elan. Ricci was surprised that his own partner of nearly seventeen years did not share his cautionary attitude, that perhaps Davidson was "in on it".

Finally, he declared "I'm not going to go through with it. I'm not going to be crucified on camera."

Ricci called a meeting. Sharon, Martha, Linda Smeaton, Father Bob, Dan, and I sat around the dining room table at Blackstrap Road. He outlined his version of the upcoming attack. Everyone, except Dan and I nodded in agreement. I had talked with each of them individually and knew they hoped he'd still cooperate with Allan Maraynes, but they were afraid to tell him how they felt.

I tried to explain that it was the opportunity of a lifetime. Yet Ricci was adamant, declaring "*60 Minutes* is set on a mission to destroy me." I didn't understand what he feared, what he had to hide. I thought Elan was a reputable place.

Ricci called late one night, his voice low and strained. He said he was at home, and Sharon Terry was listening on the extension. He informed me that he had called Allan Maraynes in New York and told him "I'm too tired, I'm too battered, I'm too weary. I'm too emotionally drained, and this is entirely too crazy."

He explained he didn't want filming at Elan because it had been on television three times during the past decade, and it hadn't gone well. He told Maraynes: "I don't want you to rescue me, and I don't want you to persecute me. I just want to be left alone."

I was upset he made the call but realized from his tone of voice he didn't want any dissension. I just lamely asked what the reaction had been to his call.

"He was trying to peg me down. So, I told him it's everything. I told him I'm going to sell Scarborough Downs, phase out Elan, maybe drop out of the governor's race, and eventually move back to New York. I said appearing on *60 Minutes* was just too stressful. Then he gave me the whole bullshit of 'Well. I wish you'd have told me sooner. You kind of ruined my month.' And then I said Well, 'I'm sorry I've ruined your month.' But I felt like saying you've ruined my life. And then he said, 'If you come to New York give us a call, my wife and I would like to have dinner with you.' That bullshit."

Good he wasn't too upset, I observed.

"It's not good," Ricci snapped, "He's coming. He just doesn't have the dessert or the icing on the cake.... "Now that my decision is made let's discuss how we minimize the damage, when he comes at us with the worst possible vengeance." I breathed a deep breath, feeling the pressure to conjure up a logical response to an illogical premise.

"I finally answered. "If you want to imagine the worst possible scenario, it would be to get everyone who doesn't like Elan on camera, and say you refused to appear to answer charges. But I just don't think it's his style to be intentionally deceptive"

"I don't want to talk about style!" Ricci interrupted angrily, realizing I was still trying to push my point. "My decision is final! Let's talk about the worst possible scenario," he sputtered.

"The worst possible scenario, assuming your theory is correct, is that he rounds up all kinds of negative things about Elan."

"Well, that doesn't fly. That's one sided."

"Yeah. But he can say you refused to go on camera that you had the chance to respond."

"Well that's it?" Ricci asked.

"Yes, I can't imagine anything else that he could do other than tell you what the charges are and ask you to respond."

“I won’t talk to him,” he announced flatly. “Well, we could give him a statement that we’ve been there before, and this is an old story. Look, he’s got a legal problem. If he throws a lot of accusations around on television and we refuse to comment, he can’t prove anything. It may be some people saying things, but the bottom line is he can’t prove anything. I mean we are licensed. There are people going through Elan every day.”

“Right, so if you’ve got nothing to hide, I wouldn’t be worrying about it,” I replied.

“But me not talking cramps his style, so he’s gotta get inside of Elan. I’m preparing. I want to be ready because I’m not going on *60 Minutes*. I’m not gonna have my beautiful face held up to ridicule. The days of sandbagging me are over. I mean am I stupid? Do I look like a meatloaf sandwich? He’ll come back to Maine in a new form, trying to trap us into one of those classic *60 Minutes* scenes. Listen we need to prepare. Sharon and I have been discussing it here with Linda. I’m gonna jump off the phone and fix myself a drink. Sharon, why don’t you update Maura about what we’ve been talking about. Run it by her and see what she thinks.”

Sharon’s voice came over the line dutifully authoritative.

“The theory is that they’ll just move in with the movie camera, television cameras anyway. They’ll just burst in and start filming. We have to station people at the beginning of the road to Elan, where they’re going to break through. The same thing with Joe’s house you know, we’ve got to protect ourselves!”

Ricci returned to the phone and talked a few more minutes about those out to destroy him for his beliefs.

Less than two months earlier the prospect of being able to tell the American people about his ordeal with the bank was an Oz-like fantasy. But as soon as it was within his reach, he didn’t want it. Though I believed Ricci had serious flaws, at that time I still felt he was indeed the victim of an injustice, and people should be aware of what the bank had done to him.

Two days later, I persuaded Ricci to let me call Maraynes. He told me he

accepted the blame, and swallowed his pride to his boss, taking responsibility for the time and expense CBS already spent on the story. “I was a little embarrassed,” he confided. “But I just mischaracterized Joe. I thought he was strong enough to withstand the pressure when he really turned out to be much more fragile than I figured,” he said, adding “It’s too bad, because it’s a provocative story, and he was going to come out looking really good.”

I told Maraynes I’d see if he could possibly change his mind. Then I told Ricci I was convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that his intentions were honorable and had always been. While not mincing my words, I embraced a matter-of-fact attitude toward the prospect of his changing his mind, which decreased his defensive posture.

Two days later I was at Blackstrap Road speaking with him and Linda when he suddenly asked me if I thought he had made the right decision. “No, I don’t,” I answered, “And you’ll probably always regret it.”

Linda gasped, then laughed. She like the others had nodded her head in agreement, when he decreed *60 Minutes* was out to sabotage him. “God, Maura’s in PR, but Joe, she’s so honest!” Linda exclaimed.

Ricci asked her what she thought, about my observations. Linda told him, “She makes sense.”

Buoyed by the vote of confidence, I declared I’d be willing to wager a year’s salary on the fact that I was right. “If I’m wrong I’ll work for nothing this entire year, or you can fire me.”

“If you’re wrong there won’t be anyplace left for you to work, Ricci countered. Five minutes later he suggested I call Maraynes and ask whether it was too late for him to do the story.

Maraynes told me had started another segment that he could possibly put on hold. But he didn’t know if Ed Bradley was still available. He said Bradley was scheduled to return from Africa the next day. “I’ll talk to Ed,” he finally said. “And if it works for him, we’ll still come to Maine.”

The next day Maraynes called. Joe Ricci was apologetic, citing work and

campaign pressures, a sore tooth, and a variety of other excuses for his behavior. Maraynes told him everything was a go. He, Ed Bradley and the crew from *60 Minutes* would arrive in seventy-two hours.

## **Chapter Twenty-Two: A Dentist with no teeth**

Three black Lincoln Town Cars pulled into the driveway of Joe's estate. Ed Bradley, Allan Maraynes, and his crew at *60 Minutes* had arrived. John Campbell, Linda, and I greeted everyone, and then watched while they carried lines of cable and numerous other pieces of equipment into the house.

During the first day they filmed background shots of Joe and Linda frolicking in front of their house with their dogs, Dax and Ginger, and scenes of Ricci opening mail at his desk in his office. The atmosphere was festive, the crew guys were friendly, asking typical touristy questions such as where they could find Maine's best boiled lobsters.

That night Ricci planned on attending a candidate's night at the University of Southern Maine. Jim Tierney and the other gubernatorial hopefuls would also be there. I told Maraynes about the event, and he and a cameraman showed up to take some shots of Ricci making his presentation. Standing beside me as he listened to Ricci address the audience, Maraynes observed, "He's a pretty good speaker, lots of charisma." I nodded in agreement, determined I would not give him the videotape of Ricci's announcement speech in Wiscasset.

Ricci's interview with Ed Bradley was scheduled for 9a.m. the next day. When I arrived at Blackstrap Road the crew was busy creating a stage set with two armchairs positioned for the interview. Sipping a mug of coffee, Joe seemed nervous, and asked me to walk with him up his driveway then down his backyard around the pool.

"So you think there will be no surprises?" he suddenly asked with an air of desperation. "None," I replied, instructing him to just tell his story, cautioning him not to refer to the bankers as "sleazebags" or "bloodsuckers."

During Ricci's conversation with Ed Bradley, Maraynes was just a few feet away, careful to remain discretely out of the audience's vision. Linda, John, and I positioned ourselves in the hallway adjacent to the living room, just behind the sound and camera crew.

Ricci gushed forth with emotion, running the gamut from depression, anger, and

moral indignation to outrage. Occasionally I'd make an observation or suggestion, but mostly I let the drama unfold, realizing that what we were watching would be edited and packaged for sixty-two million households.

Linda looked at me, with a smile or a frown, depending on how she felt the interview was going. Once, when filming stopped for a technical adjustment, she turned to me looking worried. "Joe's story doesn't sound bad enough," she complained. "He's got to show more pain." She paused then added, "Well maybe it'll do for the first-time viewer. I've just heard it so many times before."

I explained that when the segment aired, edited excerpts would be plugged into a narrative story told by Ed Bradley. "Good," Linda replied. "I hope they use the dramatic stuff."

Around noon everyone broke for lunch. Ricci sent out for food. Maraynes had no trouble accepting Ricci's hospitality, unlike a reporter for *The Boston Globe* who had refused to let him pay a small restaurant tab because of stringent 'no favors' guidelines governing journalists. Maraynes explained that *60 Minutes* was the "entertainment" division of the network and not governed by those rules.

Ricci's mood improved after his interview was over. He told Linda she'd be great as she prepared to sit down in the dining room with Ed Bradley. She and Ed talked during the break, and they learned they'd been in Paris at the same time years earlier. She liked Bradley, and whispered to Ricci, "He's a clothes horse like you." She said she'd seen his suit coat draped over a chair, revealing the fashionable Barney's of New York label.

I had never seen Linda dressed primly in a black turtleneck, and suit coat, with hair pulled back. I was impressed how she instinctively knew how to subdue her designer dazzle in favor of sensible chic, making her less likely to look like a gangster's girlfriend.

She told Ed Bradley Ricci's relationship with his children had been damaged because of the things they heard about their father at school. She said her relationship had also been under strain; his whole personality had changed because of what the bank did to him. Her eyes welled up, and her voice cracked as she described how difficult it was for Joe "to have his children ask him if he killed people for a living."

I watched Linda's interview standing next to Joe, observing her comments could have been by a script writer. Ricci smiled. "I know. She's no fool. That's why I love her."

It was about 3p.m. when everyone was ready to leave Blackstrap Road and head to Elan where two former female residents were going to speak with Ed Bradley to substantiate Joe was harassed by the attorney general's office.

Maraynes said his crew would follow us over to Elan. I headed toward my car, but Linda stopped and asked if she and Joe could ride with me. "I don't want to get my car out of the garage," she confided. "We don't want them to see the Mercedes." I realized that their two Mercedes and Joe's Bentley were locked in the garage, with the door shut.

I led the caravan into the Elan grounds for my second visit to that rural place in Poland Spring. Dr. Gerry Davidson was on the porch of the main building, a rustic bungalow, a sharp contrast to Ricci's elegant estate. Inside sat Linda Cormier, Ricci's secretary, and three staff seated with the two former residents brought there for the interview.

Maraynes suggested the cameras set up outside on the lawn since it was an unusually warm for early April. Sitting in the sunlight Ed Bradley asked the two women, Michelle, and Lisa, about their experiences with the investigators from the attorney general's office.

Michelle said, "This guy made Joe out to be this big bad horrible person, just like he was a criminal, you know a crooked person. He said, 'we all know, ha ha, where he gets his money,' like it was a joke."

Lisa said the investigator made her feel she should be afraid of Ricci, as if people from his organization were watching her. Both talked about being intimidated by seeing the investigator's gun and praised Ricci for his kindness and integrity.

I had no reason to doubt Lisa and Michelle's sincerity but questioned the context of their remarks. I doubted Maraynes knew to what extent Joe had gone to get the women to speak with Ed Bradley on camera. Neither had done well since leaving Elan. One worked at a massage parlor and had a serious drinking

problem. Ricci had someone investigate a treatment facility for her to dry out so she could appear on camera. A day earlier I overheard him on the phone saying his life depended on getting her “cleaned up and bushy-tailed to talk to *60 Minutes*.” Ricci gave money to the other woman, who worked as a stripper.

After the women’s’ televised testimony Joe was ecstatic. “Now I’ve got them between the eyes,” he said, making an imaginary gun with his thumb and forefinger.

The next day the crew traveled north to Auburn Maine to interview Mike Lawrence, a disc jockey at a radio station. Lawrence had recently asked a co-worker on the air, whether he saw the new Joe Ricci for governor campaign poster: “You know, the one that said vote for me, or I’ll break your legs.”

I explained to Maraynes that Lawrence’s joke illustrated the public sentiment about Ricci being a mobster, the product of the bank’s rumors. Lawrence told Ed Bradley he apologized because he hadn’t realized the extent of Joe Ricci’s plight and felt sorry for him. He confirmed that the average person on the street thought Ricci was dishonest. He said, “When you talk to people you get that impression, that feeling.”

Ed Bradley flew back to New York while Maraynes and his crew stayed to shoot some background footage of Portland’s Old Port and solicit opinions about Joe Ricci at a shopping mall. Maraynes was looking for people who would say they thought Joe Ricci was a member of organized crime to substantiate Ricci’s claim that the bank had ruined his reputation in the community.

I met Maraynes early Sunday morning at Scarborough Downs where he wanted to get some shots of the track, and Ricci before heading back to New York. Dick Poulos, who had not yet met Maraynes, arrived to discuss the lawsuit against the bank in greater detail. He gave Maraynes a copy of some internal bank memos from a Key Bank board meeting, though he never stated how they came into his possession. At this same time the topic of Anthony ‘Toy’ Fischer came up.

Before then I heard Fischer’s name mentioned only once as the person Ricci felt set the Scarborough Downs clubhouse on fire.

I was certainly not privy then to the contents of Fischer’s conversation with

Detective Herring at the Maine State Police barracks in January 1985 concerning the stolen human service file that he said he delivered to Ricci's lawyer's office in return for payment. Nor was I aware that Dick Poulos had implicated Fischer for arson of the Scarborough Downs clubhouse in a letter to Maine's commissioner of public safety.

Poulos told Maraynes that Fischer had been an operative for the attorney general's office, had deliberately tried to set Ricci up, and was possibly responsible for arson at Scarborough Downs.

Maraynes talked to Fischer, and even had him flown to New York at CBS's expense, where he was interviewed on camera. But a few weeks later Maraynes told me he wasn't using Fischer's testimony because of "conflicting reports that muddied the water and didn't substantiate Joe and his lawyers' claims."

What I didn't know then was that Maraynes had received a nine-page letter from Maine Deputy Attorney General James Kilbreth, which explained that Fischer met with Ricci, and his lawyers and had the stolen file, nearly three months before he had any contact with any member of the attorney general's office.

Apparently, Maraynes chose not to let extraneous facts interfere with the packaging of Ricci's torment. Maraynes didn't attempt to get to the bottom of the complex Fischer story, because it might not support Joe Ricci and his attorneys' version.

After speaking to Ricci's former wife Sherry and his sons, Maraynes also chose not to include their testimony. He might have realized it would be opening a can of worms. Better to let Ricci's account of his relationship with his sons be the sole version. It was tidy.

Maraynes knew Elan was controversial, and said so on the air, but he also referred to it "the most prestigious school for troubled teenagers in the country."

What was the basis for such an assessment? Did he merely take this statement from an Elan brochure? Did he know that the state of Maine had chosen not to renew Elan's human service licenses as a residential treatment center for troubled adolescents, and that other state licenses were no longer current?

Was he aware of the abuse complaints against Elan by former residents, and state mandates that prevented the placement of children at Elan because it violated the basic civil rights of its residents? This revelation would have been a dramatic irony particularly when Joe Ricci's major complaint against the bank was a violation of his civil rights.

Did Maraynes know that Ricci apparently avoided federal prison for robbing a mail truck by going to a drug rehabilitation center? Was he aware of his penchant for filing lawsuits, his ability to exploit situations for his own benefit, even decades years earlier when he sued his fiancée's insurance company to be able to buy her an engagement ring?

Finally, was Maraynes knowledgeable of his subject's continuing drug abuse, while acting as a trusted role model for troubled teens?

Someone could argue that none of this information was germane to the *60 Minutes* segment: "*Joe Ricci is a Marked Man.*"

But wasn't one of the most respected news shows in the world liable for these errors of omission? Didn't Allan Maraynes have an obligation to thoroughly investigate who Joe Ricci was before depicting him as the quintessential victim?

After the taping was complete and the *60 Minutes* crew left Maine, Ricci sent big baskets of flowers to Scarborough Downs, Elan, and the campaign office to show his appreciation. He was elated from the experience and thrilled the segment would likely air in late May before the show went into reruns for its summer hiatus.

I was relieved. The pressure had been enormous. I hoped I could get on with preparing for the racing season, while seeing Ricci through the last six weeks of his gubernatorial campaign. Even if he didn't win the gubernatorial primary, his positive public exposure on *60 Minutes* was victory enough.

I prepared for a calmer spring and summer. I never envisioned being broadsided by a raging human hurricane.

XXX

On the morning of April 10, just four days after, the *60 Minutes* crew left Maine,

the phone rang, and the voice mail picked up before I could answer. It was Sharon Terry.

*“I’m calling for Joe to let you know he is canceling his gubernatorial campaign effective immediately. You needn’t bother calling Joe to discuss the matter with him, since his mind is made up. Please proceed to the campaign headquarters and inform the researchers and Deanna that their services are no longer needed, except to clean out the office.”*

Dan and I felt the sting such unexpected notifications bring. Then we became angry. Why hadn’t Ricci called us?

I had been scheduled to meet a video production crew at Scarborough Downs early that morning to shoot footage for an opening day ad. Later I planned to travel to a farm in Saco to shoot some more footage. Everything was precisely planned. I was committed to going through with my plans regardless of how I felt. Dan and I stopped at the campaign headquarters and updated Deanna about the latest development. She was upset, but vowed she’d wait in the office for instructions from Joe.

It was a lovely spring day, the sort that usually breeds optimism, but Dan and I felt foolish, as if we’d wasted our time during the past months dancing like pathetic puppets. We stopped for lunch after I finished production, but I couldn’t eat.

“This is it,” I told Dan. “I’m done being nice to Joe at all costs, always understanding. Wait till I speak with him again.”

“We should have bailed after Wiscasset,” Dan observed, before stopping to correct himself. “No. I should have left in October, after the first stunt he pulled, humiliating me for no reason.”

That afternoon I spent three hours in a control room editing an ad. A few minutes before 5p.m. I was paged for “a call from Mr. Ricci.”

“Hello,” he began with feigned levity. “How’re you doing?”  
I explained I’d had a busy day full of production that would’ve gone a lot better  
If I had not been awakened by an ominous message from his hired gun before

7a.m. My tone was calm, chilly, but professional. I was resigned to the ramifications of disagreeing with him.

Hearing the barely repressed anger in my voice, he adopted the role of teacher lecturing an errant student. “I’m sorry I had to play it the way that I did but you’ve got to understand it had to be a clean break. There was no room for discussion.”

“After all you, Dan and I have been through together,” I said, citing the numerous car and plane trips, the dozens of late-night conversations. “We deserved more than a perfunctory call from Sharon.”

“Well, perhaps my methodology was a little off,” he conceded. “But things haven’t been going well with the campaign, and Dan’s strategy is shaky at best. He wants to ‘handle’ me, and I won’t have any of it.”

Speaking softer, he asked “Do you want to come over to the house so we can discuss it? I’m not really going to withdraw from the campaign. I just needed to inject new life into my candidacy and get rid of the dead wood. Can you stop by now?”

I gritted my teeth to keep calm, realizing he was trying to shift any blame for his actions to Dan, who was obviously the object of his ‘dead-wood’ reference.

“No, I can’t come over,” I replied. “It’s been a long day. I’m tired, and not very motivated to talk with you about much of anything right now. And I don’t understand your aggression towards Dan. I think you’re imagining things.”

I detected surprise at the end of the receiver. He had never experienced indignation from me. He murmured a few things about calling me later and hung up. Driving home that night I felt better than I had in months because I rationally articulated my true feelings about his irrational behavior without couching every word and disclaiming every sentence. I realized with a shudder, that except for my stance on the *60 Minutes* interview, I had been become just like the other ‘yes people’ in Joe’s inner circle, what Eric Moynihan had once nicknamed “the nodding committee.”

Dan and I were eating dinner when the phone rang after 8p.m. We decided not to

answer any calls that night, or even check to see who was calling. We were drained. We decided not to think about Joe Ricci for the rest of the night, focusing instead on our son Benjamin, who unfortunately for the past few months, had been unaccustomed to much attention.

The next morning, we listened to the calls from the night before. There was an eight-minute message from Joe Ricci. He said he was sorry five times, and that he was ashamed at least seven.

He said he owed us an apology. He wanted to let us know the reason for his bizarre behavior. He told us Toy Fischer had been harassing him, threatening to blow his head off and compromise his comments to Allan Maraynes and *60 Minutes*.

“I’m just very ashamed that you feel victim Dan to ah, that craziness. Not that I didn’t feel what I felt. I felt all that, but it’s what Maura said earlier today when I was still very crazy. We would like to believe that we have better dialogue than that. And it wasn’t anything that couldn’t be worked out. I don’t know what to do. I don’t know what to do because I’ve been terrorized for six days straight. You fell victim to it because you didn’t realize what was going on. All I feel right now is ashamed of myself because I didn’t realize why I was striking out...If you wanna to call back and talk I’m here. I’m sorry. I’m ashamed. I want to go forward, but the question is whether I can psychologically go forward and if we can’t get past this. I guess it’s a part of my own pathology-alienating and destructing the people I build rapport with. Whether we go forward or not isn’t important. It’s not the issue here. It’s just an attempt to get you to understand. I’m not too psychologically balanced right now. I’m sorry, Maura for our conversation earlier today. It’s part of the madness. Good night.”

Listening to Ricci plea for our understanding I was confused about his references to being terrorized by Fischer. I had been in contact with Ricci that whole week and had never heard of death threats against him by Fischer. It just didn’t make any sense to either Dan or me.

His revelation that ‘part of his pathology’ was to alienate and destroy people who were close to him was a chilling confession. I wondered how familiar he was with his own pathology. Realizing that he was the executive director of an adolescent treatment center that promises to improve a young person’s

interpersonal relationship skills, I began to fear Joe was like a dentist with no teeth.

## **Chapter Twenty-Three: I can't take back cruelty I inflict**

Dan and I were surprised by Ricci's profuse apologies. We had never heard him say, "I'm sorry." Hearing it five times in eight minutes amidst varied expressions of shame astounded us. We couldn't walk away from a penitent man, but we also knew we had to create some distance before his pathology consumed us.

When I arrived at Scarborough Down the day after his call, Linda appeared in my office. "Thank God you're here!" she exclaimed. "Joe's been calling me every five minutes, asking whether you're in yet. When you didn't return his call last night, he said it was over, thought you'd abandoned him." I told Linda I planned to call him. "Good. He's home now waiting. I'll go tell him you're in and that you'll be calling him."

He sounded subdued and asked, whether he and I could go forward and finish the campaign. I said I hoped we could since only eight weeks remained. I cautioned, though, that I was extraordinarily busy getting ready for Scarborough Downs, which opened in less than four weeks. I told him I needed some time and space to complete production and media buying for the season's ads. He said that he knew I was overworked and was grateful I understood his "traumas."

I worked round the clock that week to finish all the production and media buying for the Scarborough Downs season, laboring late into the night at the TV studio, and at home. Joe had a few public appearances and seemed disturbed I couldn't accompany him, despite my detailed explanations of what I had to accomplish. He seemed resentful that Scarborough Downs was demanding my attention, even though Scarborough Downs was what I had been contracted to do.

I completed in ten days what would normally take a month. I was exhausted, but the ads, media buys and promotions were ready for the season. I asked Joe whether he'd mind if I took three days off to visit my sister in Virginia Beach the following week, because my son was on school vacation. I explained the timing seemed right since the pace was only going to quicken once the track opened. I also noted his campaign schedule was unusually light that week. He said it would be fine, but his voice had a bitter edge.

Dan hadn't seen Ricci since the day Sharon Terry called to cancel the campaign.

Dan didn't officially say he wasn't on board any longer but was easing himself out. Then Joe called Dan on a Saturday afternoon, the day before we were to leave for Virginia Beach. He said he wanted to mend the fence before we left and invited us over to Blackstrap Road to have drinks with him and Linda.

It was the first purely social invitation we ever received from him, the only time Dan and I had ever gone to Blackstrap Road on a Saturday night. We hired a sitter, not sure what to expect.

When we arrived, Linda answered the door smiling, wearing a terry cloth bathrobe, bare feet, and no makeup. "After 8p.m. I let it all hang out," she laughed. She kissed Dan on the cheek, and complimented my clothing, as she led us into the living room.

Ricci greeted us, "Hi guys, would you like to listen to some music. I have this new song by Chris De Burgh I'd like you to hear." During the next hour and a half Linda kept filling our wine glasses, and feeding us hors d'oeuvres, while we all chatted amiably.

They were the perfect hosts, made us feel welcome and special. Ricci was unusually funny, complimentary to both Linda and me, and he seemed to even have a special affinity with Dan. It was like we were visiting with friends, something we rarely did during that period. It almost felt normal.

Then Ricci began excusing himself from the living room about every fifteen minutes and started slurring his words. But his mood remained upbeat. I mentioned I had brought the just completed copy of the opening day ad for the new season at Scarborough Downs and asked if they'd like to be the first to screen what I finished that morning. Both were enthusiastic, and the four of us went to the basement game room to see it.

I considered the ad one of my best, so I wasn't too nervous. Linda exclaimed, "It's so artistic! Can we see it again?" "It's just great," Ricci agreed, as he ran it once more while we all watched silently. Then ejecting the disc, he turned to me.

"You did a really good job with that," he announced, looking suddenly serious. Then his eyes narrowed, and a dark expression came over his face. "How'd you find the time to do it?" he suddenly queried, suspiciously, with an expression of

hurt and defiance.

“It wasn’t easy,” I answered trying to ignore his expression. “Actually, it was shot in one day at Scarborough Downs and then at a farm in Saco.” “Well,” he grunted. “You certainly know how to pull stuff out of a hat.”

He excused himself and walked upstairs. Linda seemed stunned by his abrupt exit. I mumbled something about the hour being late and our sitter. Linda tried to resume her lightheartedness as she walked us to the door. In the hallway as we were leaving, she called out to Joe to say we were going. He emerged from the bathroom. “Ok, bye,” he waved, without enthusiasm, walking away before we were even out the door.

“I’m not even going to attempt to figure out what we did wrong,” I said to Dan as we drove home in bewilderment.

We took an early plane to Virginia Beach the next day and did not get Ricci’s message that morning on our answering machine until we returned home four days later.

“Sorry about last night. I guess I got a little crazy. Give me a call. Oh, this is Joe,” he added with a chuckle, realizing he didn’t really need to identify himself. When we were in Virginia Beach Ricci called from the New York City Hilton, and spoke to my sister, “I think he thought I was really you,” she observed. “I had to assure him he was talking to someone else. He said he’d be in and out of his hotel room, so he’d try later,” she explained, noting that he sounded ‘weird.’

I assumed he had gone to New York to meet with a potential new trial lawyer for his Key Bank case. He needed someone to replace Dan Lilley whom he fired in February. He had been getting apprehensive about the possibility of going to court in mid-May without an experienced trial attorney. He said he wanted a lawyer who knew “the fine art of courtroom histrionics.”

Earlier in the week Poulos and Campbell had petitioned the court for a continuance of case, but federal court Judge Bruce Selya denied that request, keeping the May trial date.

In a separate motion the bank’s lawyer from the Boston law firm of Burns and

Levinson, asked Judge Selya to impose sanctions on Ricci and his lawyers for their contact with *60 Minutes*, which they said could pose a “serious and imminent threat” to the bank’s right to a fair trial. Ricci didn’t seem to care. He said affidavits were being prepared that would demonstrate that he did not solicit *60 Minutes*.

After being denied the continuance Ricci had his pilot fly him to New York in search of a “kick ass civil rights lawyer.” He had gotten some referrals from the Center for Constitutional Law and was checking them out while he was staying at the Hilton.

“I’m desperate,” he announced over the phone that night. “If I have to go to court in three weeks, there’s going to be hell to pay.”

Two days later I was back at my desk at Scarborough Downs when Ricci called to say that he had just returned to Maine via Connecticut and had found some lawyers who would not be intimidated by the likes of Judge Selya.

We talked for a while about the campaign appearances he had cancelled the previous week so he could make his impromptu trip to New York. Suddenly his voice became very serious.

“You know it really hurt me what you did,” he said. “I know that you and Dan have distanced yourselves from me, but I just wanted you to know that I understand what you did and why you did it. I was obviously wrong, and I victimized Dan. But I can’t take back the cruelty I inflict. It’s over, it’s done, and I’d like to move on, and finish the campaign strong. Are you and Dan willing to help me do that?”

I explained that we had both been pushed to the limit with work on the campaign, that I especially felt burnt out juggling Scarborough Downs with work for his Key Bank lawsuit, and the campaign, but tried to assure him we held no grudges.

“Well,” he answered as if I hadn’t said anything.

“I’ll never feel as intimate with either of you again. But for what it’s worth to you, whatever happens down the road, I loved every single minute of it, and this

isn't sake or pot talking. I'm serious. So, lets finish out strong. God knows, we might even win."

I told Dan how Ricci felt we had abandoned him by reducing our campaign activities, and then spending three days in Virginia Beach.

Reluctantly Dan agreed to get involved again.

"I'll do it, not to help Joe but to help you," he said because Scarborough Downs was opening in nine days. "I'll lighten your load between now and the June 10 primary," he promised.

On Saturday, the day before Scarborough Downs' traditional opening day extravaganza, two researchers and two volunteers met in the campaign headquarters to stuff and mail 500 letters to the Democratic constituency. I had commitments at the track so I couldn't go to this envelope stuffing party, but Dan went, and took our son who also volunteered to help. After a while even candidate Joe Ricci showed up and spent an hour there getting the job done. My son, Benjamin, had heard a lot about Joe, Ricci, but had never met him face to face before Dan introduced them that day. Benjamin told me that Joe gave him money to buy a sub. He thought he was nice, but "a little strange." He remarked that Joe went to the bathroom at least four times and began to act stranger the longer he stayed at the office.

Ricci left the campaign headquarters about 2p.m. to shower, and exercise before a cocktail party and dinner for the Maine letter carriers union at the Samoset Resort in Rockland. A short while later Dan took our son home to a sitter and proceeded with me to Blackstrap Road where we picked up Ricci and drove to his plane at the Jetport. He was upbeat, ready to "slay the dragons." He told me I looked pretty in my spring suit, then amended his observation, to say "beautiful really." He complimented Dan's driving and talked about confronting the attorney general.

But once we landed in Rockland his mood dampened. The crowded noisy room where he had to speak without a podium annoyed him. Nevertheless, he made a few remarks, and just as everybody else was preparing for dinner, declared it was time for us to go. Outside in the hotel lobby he suggested he take us to a 'quiet and civilized' meal before we taxied back to his plane.

We stopped at The Black Pearl in Rockland. From our table overlooking the ocean we watched night all, and felt the air charged with energy. It was less than 15 hours until the beginning of my third season at Scarborough Downs, only one week until the state Democratic convention, and not quite six weeks before the Democratic primary. And Ricci's trial against Key Bank was set to begin in nine days, the Monday after the state Democratic convention.

Despite this highly charged atmosphere, I felt calm that evening, basking in an impromptu dinner by the sea. Ricci leaned over to me when Dan went to the men's room, to let me know that he'd met my son that afternoon.

"He looks a lot like you", he smiled somewhat sadly, adding "Meeting him stirred some feelings about my own sons". I'm going to repair that relationship soon, just as soon as I get done with my lawsuit."

The opening of the track the next day went well. I did not see or hear from Ricci all day. He spent most of the time locked up in his clubhouse apartment communicating with mutuel manager Bobby Leighton, and Eric by phone, though they were only a few hundred feet away.

After completing my supervision of the special promotions, I returned to my office, and prepared Ricci's script for his *State Watch* radio show that night. During the afternoon's last race, a little before 6p.m, a secretary alerted me that Joe wanted a meeting with all managers in the conference room in ten minutes.

After everyone assembled, he stormed in looking disheveled. "We can't go the next hundred and twenty-two days like we went today," he hissed. "In fact, we can't go another day, that is assuming you people want to work at all."

He railed against the way the bars and concessions were run, the incompetence of everyone. All employees sat in hushed silence. No one could understand. The track had just broken another record handle for opening day. The place had been mobbed, and everyone had just completed the most difficult six hours of the season.

I was wondering whether he had forgotten about his radio program set to begin in less than forty-five minutes, when I heard my name mentioned.

"And Maura," he said full of agitation "You've got to start hyping this place or

we're going to lose our shirts." He went on a few more minutes, about other things then abruptly stopped. "I've got a radio show to do," he declared, and walked out of the room.

The phone rang in my office ten minutes later. It was Ricci wanting to know whether I was ready to leave for the radio station. He seemed calmer, but still tense.

Surprisingly, the show wasn't as bad as I feared. He kept closely to the script and was civil with callers. But listening to him talk about the plight of working people in Maine, I began to feel ill, and wondered whether he distinguished between them and his own abused employees.

When he closed his show in his traditional way, empowering his audience to "*Stay well and fight back*," I decided I should follow this advice. I had labored eighty hours that week preparing for the opening day extravaganza and working on his campaign, so driving Ricci to Horsefeather's after the broadcast, I told him I was upset that he indicated I hadn't done sufficient advertising for the track.

"Oh, don't worry about it," he responded getting out of the car. "What I said earlier didn't mean a thing." Then he turned on his heel and entered the bar.

Two days later Ricci and his lawyers Poulos and Campbell flew to Rhode Island and appealed the judge's denial of their motion for continuance. They failed, and the Key Bank trial was set to begin that Monday.

Ricci called me at Scarborough downs that afternoon, asking to be picked up at the Portland Jetport in an hour because he didn't want to ride in the same car as his incompetent attorneys. My car was in the garage, so I arranged Dan to pick me up, and we both headed to the airport. Once the aircraft landed Ricci bolted from his plane, leaving Poulos and Campbell behind.

He thanked us for rescuing him and asked us to his house to help him plan strategy, since his worst fears had come true. He always had a knack for transforming any negative event into a full-blown crisis, but he outdid himself that evening.

When we arrived on Blackstrap Road Linda was waiting. Sharon Terry arrived from Elan a few minutes later. Four of us were ready for a private showing by our star performer, acting out a drama in his living room. He said he needed to call his other lawyer Joe Reeder in Washington D.C. and let him know “the shit hit the fan” before Poulos and Campbell gave him their distorted version. Ricci dialed Reeder at his home, told him the news, accused him of total incompetence and threatened to sue him.”

He hung up and seemed strangely calm. Well, that takes care of him,” he announced sounding gratified as if he’d just had a big meal. “Now he won’t sleep tonight.”

He continued ruminating about his plight, and said he needed an attorney to file a “*Writ of Mandamus*” charging Judge Selya with bias. But Poulos’s office didn’t want to do it, nor did Reeder’s so he had to find an attorney who would carry out his directive. If he had no luck with that, he mused, he could have them all withdraw leaving him with no counsel. “How could a judge make me go to trial with no lawyers?” he asked.

Later we went to dinner at The Galley Restaurant a few miles from Blackstrap Road. Linda and Sharon went in one car, while Ricci rode with Dan and me.

Enroute his voice got low and secretive. “There must be other ways I can stop the trial next week,” he mused before listing some possibilities. These included inflicting himself with an injury that would make his appearance at court impossible, or having the jury thrown out because of some unauthorized communication that could result in a mistrial.

“There has to be a way,” he concluded as we drove up to the restaurant. “It’s just a matter of how creative I care to get.” Just as we were about to get out of the car, he stopped us with a cautionary hand. “Don’t tell anyone what I said”, he warned.

“Not even Linda or Sharon. It’s just to stay with the three of us.”

He drank his dinner that night, complaining that his nerves had upstaged his appetite. He riled our server with his constant criticism. Linda spent much of the meal talking to Sharon. Dan and I suffered as Ricci placed himself at the head of table between the us.

Outside in the parking lot we were saying good night when he suddenly reached out and hugged Dan in a manner befitting a character in a Mario Puzo novel. He gave him a kiss on one side of the cheek, and then the other. We attributed the drama to his overcharged emotional state. But later we realized the implications of the embrace. The meal we just had was the last supper we would ever share with Joe Ricci.

## **PART IV**

## **Chapter Twenty-Four: I want everything dignified and low key**

We didn't know to what extremes he'd go to accomplish what he wanted. It was obvious our relationship with Joe Ricci could not continue.

Ricci hired someone in Providence to investigate Judge Selya's back-ground. He learned Selya was a Republican, who had friendships with other Republicans. "Bingo, that's it," he exclaimed. "He's a Republican and I'm a Democratic candidate for governor. Undoubtedly Chafee knows McKernan, Maine's Republican party's candidate.

It was a long shot, but Ricci found a young attorney from Connecticut named Jim Bergen who agreed he'd package that theory to recluse Judge Selya. Dick Poulos and John Campbell didn't want any part of it but reluctantly agreed to file it with a cover letter if Bergen drafted it.

Meanwhile, Allan Maraynes called to let us know Ricci's segment would not air on *60 Minutes* seasonal finale on May 20 as originally planned. CBS attorneys advised waiting until after the June 10 Democratic gubernatorial primary because Maine's Attorney General James Tierney, also a candidate, factored in the story, and could ask for equal time provision from the CBS affiliate in Maine. This would put the local station in the difficult position of having to give Tierney eight minutes of free air-time, the length of Ricci's segment on *60 Minutes*.

Ricci was initially disappointed. But he decided if his trial was also postponed, having the piece on the air closer to his day in court might be helpful.

xxx

The Democratic Party's preparations for the state convention had been going on for months. In early April, the day Ed Bradley was interviewing Ricci on Blackstrap Road, a meeting was held in Augusta for representatives from each of the campaigns. Jennifer Wescott, a researcher for Ricci's campaign attended. Candidate names were drawn from a hat, allowing representatives to choose the speaking order. Ricci's name was the first one drawn so Jennifer chose the first slot, thinking that many of the attendees might leave early, and Ricci would be guaranteed a full house.

When Ricci heard, he was furious. “I want to speak last,” he demanded. “That way I can use the senseless drivel the others say to annihilate them.” He insisted I notify party leaders that he wouldn’t be able to speak first because he would be out of state with his attorneys and may be arriving late. Democratic Party chairman Rick Barton said it was difficult to switch the order since the others had chosen the subsequent slots. But he agreed to let Ricci speak last if he had to arrive late. “Otherwise, we’ll have to keep things as they are,” he explained.

I told Ricci if he was adamant about speaking last, he should arrive around 4 p.m. He agreed. Anxious not to have Joe Ricci think he was ‘being handled,’ I consulted him every step of the way about his participation in the convention. I asked about having a floor demonstration with the traditional balloons and ballyhoo after his speech.

“We’d might as well go for it. But if we’re gonna do it, let’s make it bombastic,” he said. During the week before the two-day gala in Waterville, Maine, the campaign researchers, and a group of volunteers spent hours stapling stakes to about three hundred signs, compiling candidate packets, and preparing a table of Ricci campaign literature. Everyone finally headed to Waterville, armed with placards, wooden signs, balloons, helium tanks, bales of string, and thousands of sheets of campaign literature.

Three campaign workers checked into the Holiday Inn in Waterville where they planned to stay Thursday and Friday night. Dan was going to stay Thursday night to supervise things on Friday morning, then return to Portland before we all gathered in Waterville for Ricci’s speech on Saturday.

Ricci had to fly to Rhode Island on Friday with his lawyers but planned to be back Friday night so we could confer on his convention speech, which he said he had almost completed. “I need to write it myself because I don’t want another Wiscasset,” he told me, referring to his campaign announcement disaster in March, which he later blamed on his inability to read a speech he didn’t write. (He apparently forgot he stayed up snorting cocaine and drinking the night before.)

Before leaving for Rhode Island Joe called. “Don’t you think if people knew what Judge Selya’s doing to me, they’d be outraged?” he asked, telling me he was considering calling a press conference to alert everyone. I said I didn’t think the press conference was such a great idea because his case against Key Bank

was complex.

“Most people here in Maine are just trying to carve out an existence, and don’t have the time or energy to be outraged by the day-to-day legal maneuvering of your court case,” I observed. “If you’re right, we’re in deep shit as a society, because what’s happening to me could happen to anyone else. Only I have the money to fight back,” he said.

Dan stopped by Scarborough Downs and asked if I’d like to have dinner before he left for his overnight trip to Waterville. During dinner I decided I could accompany him, if we returned to Portland the next afternoon for some meetings I had scheduled.

“Joe’s been calling the past three hours and he sounds really pissed, one worker exclaimed.” “He wants you to call him the very second you get in.” Someone suggested I make the call in one of the two rooms the campaign staffers were already staying in, rather than take the time to check in. Stepping into the doorway I was greeted by a room full of balloons, dangling by strings from the ceilings, and dozens and dozens of signs ready to be hung.

“Wow!” I exclaimed. “You people have certainly been busy!” “This is only half of it!” Jennifer told me. “We’ve already put up all the rest of the signs,” she added proudly, with a sigh of exhaustion. In addition to the standard campaign issued signage, they had hand lettered in various colors at least twenty-five more, signs each bearing an original slogan. Climbing over this political patchwork I read the slogans Ricci had authorized.

*Joe Ricci: This one for the People...Vote Ricci and relax...Time to put a businessman in The Blaine House...A man for all Seasons.... No lust for power: He's just looking for justice.*

I dialed Ricci’s home in Falmouth. “Hi,” I said trying to sound upbeat. “I’m in Waterville. We just got here, and heard you called.”

“Listen, I’ve decided. I don’t want any arguments from you. I don’t want Ricci signs posted anywhere around the place. I don’t want any balloons either. I don’t want anything. I’m going to Rhode Island tomorrow. I’ll be back tomorrow night and call you then. I’ll be there for my speech on Saturday. I want everything

dignified, and low key. Do you understand?"

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I thought about the enormous energy and expense that had already gone into all the campaign preparations. Four people had spent an entire week working on everything. Even as Ricci was speaking with me, his campaign staffers were doubling their efforts.

I knew he wasn't in any mood for discussion, so I simply told him that many signs had already been put up, believing he'd just tell us not to continue posting them. "I don't care how many may have been put up already," he seethed. "I don't care if they're all over North America. I don't want any signs or balloons, no trappings, no floor demonstration. So, take them down. Tell everybody to take them down," he demanded, each word oozing with anger.

"Ok I'll tell everyone," I replied, realizing I was asked to be a conduit for madness.

Dan and I left Waterville the next morning after a night of playing therapists to the researchers. While all the other campaigns were putting their candidate's signs up, they had to go around and take theirs down. I was furious at his latest stunt yet amused by the irony of the researchers still wanting to put up Ricci for governor signs. At that point I felt the Ricci for governor signs were best hidden from view, that his campaign for governor should die a subtle death.

The next day in Providence Rhode Island Ricci's three lawyers lost their motion for a continuance. Poulos and Campbell testified that they did not have the competency to try a case of that magnitude. They explained their lack of trial experience was the reason another attorney, Daniel Lilley had been the designated trial counsel. But Ricci fired Lilly. Judge Selya was livid. A courtroom had been reserved for the six-week trial and eighty potential jurors had already been subpoenaed to appear in court on Monday morning.

Eric, the general manager of Scarborough Downs, called me Saturday morning, the day Ricci was scheduled to address the state convention at Colby College in Waterville. I had already been on the phone calling newspapers and radio stations to let them know that there was a 'twin tri carryover' from the previous night's races that needed to be publicized. (This was a large pool of money, carried over, from day to day if there was no winner.)

I told Eric what I'd done to promote greater attendance that evening, but he seemed disinterested. When I mentioned that I heard the track was mobbed, and the handle was high the previous night, he answered, "Yes, but there's no joy in Mudville. I'm completely out of favor with Joe, and honestly I don't know why. Frankly, I don't know how much more I can take."

He told me he called Ricci the night before to report attendance was terrific, and the track was about to break a handle record. Instead of being pleased, Ricci was confrontive, and pointedly informed him that the attendance certainly was not up." They're lying to you," he hissed. "They are playing games with you." When Eric sought an explanation, he just cut him off, and told him he'd tell him what he meant on Tuesday.

Eric was dazed. The place was packed, bars and concession sales soared, yet Joe Ricci refused to be satisfied. Instead, he screamed that the track was in a state of chaos, that there was a total breakdown, hurling personal insults like artillery fire. Finally, Eric asked why he was being so abusive, and Ricci's voice cut like a surgical tool.

"Because I want distance between you and me," he seethed into the phone.

Eric said, "He's devastating me. He wants me to fire the receptionist. The place has three hundred employees. It has two hundred extensions, six buildings, three restaurants, seven lounges, and the girl makes a mistake on her third night, so he wants to fire her because she's incompetent. Of course, we pay her \$3.75 an hour."

Eric took it personally, He said: "I told Joe last night that I'm ready to lose it. I said 'Joe, you're affecting me emotionally. I can't go home every night after everything looks rosy, and then have you just cut the legs from underneath me.' You know I've always been able to let him whip me a little bit. Now I just don't know how much more I can handle. What have I done?"

"Joe thinks he can act whatever way suits him, because he is signing your paycheck," I observed. "Well, I don't know how much longer he's going to be signing mine." Eric said. "It's my son's birthday today. He's four years old, and I just don't feel like celebrating anything. Good luck at the convention, by the way. Joe Ricci would make a fine governor."

That weekend I finally realized that there were some things more important than a fat paycheck. I had to finally say no to Joe Ricci.

## **Chapter Twenty-Five: There's a treacherous road ahead**

Ricci called seconds after I finished my conversation with Eric. He sounded like he was talking through a long tube. "I don't know what I'm going to do about a speech today. I've been too busy to work on anything. Do you have any suggestions?"

I suggested he use the aborted Wiscasset announcement speech since nobody had heard it. I reluctantly offered to rework it and drop it off at his house. He thanked me stiffly and didn't mention flying up to Waterville with him. It was just as well. Dan and I decided it'd be better if we drove. Dan said he'd be tempted to open the plane door and push him out.

Neither Dan nor I wanted to go to the convention, but we felt we had to be there for the researchers who had been at Colby in a state of confusion since Thursday night.

I wondered whether Joe had seen the front page of the morning newspaper. There was a big photo of the convention hall decorated for the day's events. Clearly visible in the foreground was a Ricci for Governor poster, and a cluster of Ricci balloons. Obviously, the campaign staffers in Waterville hadn't taken down all the signs and balloons. I wondered how he would react.

Dan and I drove to Blackstrap Road to drop off the speech. I went to the door while Dan stayed in our car with the engine running. "Joe's getting dressed. We're leaving in about two hours to fly to Waterville because he wants to be there by 3p.m.," Linda explained. "Joe told me to tell you you're welcome to fly up with us if you want," she added, looking a little panicked we might accept the offer.

"No, that's all right," I replied with a faint smile.

"We don't want any turbulence in the air."

Dan and I arrived in Waterville a little after 3p.m. The Colby College gym and surrounding campus were packed with politicians, their families, friends, and associates. The mood was festive, and fanciful. Smiles, handshakes and hugs were the order of the day. The convention was the special event of the season, the culmination of months of effort and everyone was putting on a best face. Everyone except the solitary figure we saw in the distance.

Joe Ricci was scowling, and nobody from the campaign staff was near him, except for dutiful Deanna Atkinson. Linda stood a few feet away, looking sick. When he spotted us, his eyes blazed, his mouth spitting forth a venomous greeting: “Well hello, you did a really great job of getting the signs taken down,” he sneered. Thanks a lot!”

Prepared for his hostility, I responded by calmly telling him that Dan and I both made his intent known to everyone, and obviously they listened somewhat since at least two hundred Ricci for governor signs were piled passively on the floor in the field house.

“I couldn’t do any more than give them your instructions,” I announced, noticing the dozen or so signs still posted around the gym.

“What did you want me to do, cut their hands off or tie them up? They’re human beings over whom I have no control.” Linda was looking over Joe’s shoulder, weakly nodded her head towards me in empathy. Ricci looked like he was going to explode, his dark eyes full of fury, his mouth tight. He wouldn’t talk to us, but we stayed close to him, like abused children still cling to their parents simply because they have no place else to go.

It was a spring day with promises of flower blossoms and balmy summer days, yet the air around our candidate was thick and stagnant as he chain smoked and glared at everyone. Some well-wishers stopped to chat or shake hands, but quickly retreated as Ricci railed on about the latest injustice that had been thrust upon him.

“I’m a candidate for governor, and I’m being denied my constitutional right to campaign,” he told anyone who would listen. “I’m being forced to go to court on Monday because I had the misfortune to get a Republican judge ...” I was embarrassed as I watched helplessly while he alienated everyone around him. Dan looked away in disgust.

Then suddenly Ricci turned to me and announced that he was not going to use the speech I delivered to his doorstep. Instead, he was going to produce “a stinging indictment” of the Democratic party. Clenching his teeth with defiance she declared, “And I’m speaking last today. I hope everybody knows that.” I reminded him of the arrangement we discussed a week ago that would’ve

allowed that to happen but pointed out he was not late. Perhaps he wanted to leave and come back just after the speeches started?

“I’m not leaving. I’m going on the stage with the others, and I will speak last,” he insisted. “Go tell Mr. State Party Chairman that!” Feeling the need to avert an explosive public spectacle I sought out Rick Barton and explained Ricci’s intense desire to go last. He seemed empathetic, but unyielding. “I’ve dealt with Joe before,” he told me “And I know it’s difficult, but he’s gotta play by the rules like everybody else.”

When I conveyed Barton’s mindset Joe didn’t blink. “We’ll see what happens,” he said. We were standing in the entrance to the gymnasium when he suddenly turned to his pilot Nelson and mentioned “the box.” Minutes later Nelson appeared, bearing a cardboard container full of copies of the motion to recuse Judge Selya.

“I’m going to let everyone know that the Democratic process is being interfered with” he announced. “I had Deanna copy these this morning. I’m going to distribute them to the press. This is the news of the convention.” “I pointed out that he had claimed his campaign had absolutely nothing to do with his case against the bank, and vice versa.

“From a public relations perspective, I just don’t think this is the place,” I stated calmly, and slowly, trying to quell the raging storm rising in his eyes. But I knew my attempts were futile, so I stopped talking just before Ricci swung his weight around and hissed, “I don’t care a rat’s ass about public relations!” It was my cue, and I knew my next line.

“Well, obviously you don’t, so I guess I’ll be moving on.”

“I’ll take full responsibility for my actions,” he bellowed. Without missing a beat Dan moved closer and told him, “You certainly will.” Then Dan and I walked away.

During the next hour we viewed him with an objectivity that can only come from distance. He was pathetic, huddled at a table furiously writing the most important speech of his campaign, a half-hour before the presentations were scheduled to begin. When he and the other candidates filed on stage and seated themselves in a straight row, he sat behind them in an aisle of empty chairs. The effect was eerie, this lone figure on the back of the big stage, scowling at the audience.

Senate majority leader, Charles Pray, the man responsible for introducing the candidate speeches, began with a nearly verbatim version of Ricci's background summary I had submitted. He introduced Joe Ricci as a "*successful entrepreneur, and founder of one of the most prestigious treatment centers for troubled adolescents in the country*". It was an impressive introduction, and the crowd applauded as Ricci approached the platform. But within seconds it was apparent that something was amiss. Ricci cut off the applause by abruptly chopping the air with his hand.

"I want to address you, but I must follow my choice, and speak last. I hope some of you will stay to hear it." Somebody booed as he returned to sit in his self-imposed exile behind the others. Pray came back to the podium to introduce the next candidate. It wasn't clear whether Ricci was going to be allowed to speak last or not.

After the speeches by the other four candidates, along with their requisite floor demonstrations, there was an awkward silence before Pray yielded the floor to John Diamond, the chairman of the convention. Addressing the sea of spectators, he announced that in keeping with the spirit of the Democratic party, an "open party that does not in any way work to stifle any individual" Joe Ricci would be allowed to address the convention last as he insisted. There was no repetition of the glowing Ricci introduction Pray had read previously.

Walking resolutely to the microphone, Ricci attacked the other candidates, plucking away at their faults like a wild-eyed bird of prey. Finally, he claimed he was the only real candidate, espousing party principles.

"He told the audience about his childhood, according to Joe, how his humble beginnings heightened his sensitivity to others. In closing he warned: "There's a treacherous road ahead. Be careful."

Dan, and I watched as he flitted from one topic to another like a frenzied fly buzzing around a picnic table. His speech reflected the hit and run style I had come to know and hate. Afterwards, we weaved our way through the maze of hallways behind the stage, emerged, into the spring afternoon and headed for our car. We stopped briefly, to remove our Ricci for Governor campaign buttons, and toss them in the trash.

I still had a year contract to head for Scarborough Downs. I hoped I could put blinders on and simply do the work I had been hired to do twenty-six months ago.

When I arrived at Scarborough Downs that night, Eric appeared more distraught than he had been with me on the phone in the morning. Ricci had called him an hour earlier. He told him: “During the next few weeks, you’ve got to decide and decide what side you’re on. I’ll be watching.”

“What the hell is going on?” Eric asked. “What is Joe trying to do, make us all go crazy?”

“Be careful,” I warned. “There’s a treacherous road ahead...”

## **Chapter Twenty-Six: Stay Well and Fight Back**

On Monday morning, May 12, 1986, the stage was set in Portland's Federal Court for the Ricci vs. Key Bank trial to begin. A cavalcade of lawyers, prospective jurors, reporters, and curiosity seekers showed up at the courthouse ready for another round from Joe Ricci, fresh from his performance that weekend in Waterville. Unknown to them, Ricci had no more intention of going to trial then than he had of speaking first at the state convention.

Judge Selya was furious over the motion to disqualify him from presiding over the trial and delivered a stinging 23-page address from the bench accusing Ricci and his attorneys of 'judicial blackmail.' He told the packed courtroom that allegations he was politically biased were the "rankest of hogwash." Selya said that less than two months earlier Ricci and his attorneys had been anxious to get their case to court, enthusiastically agreeing to the May 11 court date. He called the Ricci's legal team "spitefully irresponsible" and said it "posed an ominous threat to the integrity of the judicial system." Selya said he was going to ask a separate judge to determine what sanctions should be levied against Ricci and his attorneys, which could include the dismissal of the four-year-old civil suit. Pending all this he granted Ricci the continuance he wanted all along, acknowledged he was ironically "playing the plaintiff's game." Outside the court Ricci told reporters he was more confident than ever in his attorney Jim Bergen because he stood up to an obviously biased Judge.

The headlines the following day on the front page of the *Portland Press Herald* read "*Judge Blasts Ricci.*" But few knew the behind-the-scenes story of the blasting Ricci was doing of his own. He was not one to suffer in silence. If he was feeling pain, he'd make sure somebody somewhere hurt more.

The day after his convention speech he had Elan's executive director Sharon Terry make a series of threatening calls to Jennifer Westcott, the campaign aide responsible for choosing the time slot for his speech in Waterville. He was convinced she had stolen an audio copy of his taped address to the convention, and wanted it returned. Her protestations that she knew nothing about the tape were ignored as Terry made repeated harassing calls to her parents' home.

On Mother's Day, the day after the convention debacle, Dan, Benjamin, and I

visited my mother in Massachusetts, returning in time for a big race at Scarborough Downs.

When I got home that evening two messages from Ricci greeted me. The first stated. “I just want to let you know that unless I have a copy of the tape of my convention speech by 2 p.m. today, Maura, you can consider all employment you have with me terminated.”

The second message amended the first. “Hello. This is Joe. I heard that you might be in Massachusetts and may not have gotten my first message, so I want the tape in my hands by 6 p.m. tonight in time for my radio show. We’re not fooling around over here.”

I knew nothing about any tape. The threatening nature of both calls was the impetus I needed to finally wake up. I wrote a letter outlining my contractual obligations to Ricci, and his to me, so my future role as his employee would be clearly understood.

A couple of nights later I heard his voice on my answering machine. “My name is Joe Ricci and I just want you to know I have both copies of the tape, the synthesized tape and the real one.”

I had absolutely no idea what he was talking about. I refused to plug into the madness. A half hour later Father Bob, Ricci’s spiritual emissary, left a message saying Joe was upset by my behavior, and he wanted to talk to me about it. I was not moved by this midnight plea from the priest on the payroll.

The press learned that Jennifer Wescott, Celeste Cloutier, Dan, and I were no longer with Ricci’s campaign. Jennifer had written a letter to the newspaper, apologizing to the Democratic Party for what she considered Ricci’s inappropriate behavior at the convention, revealing she resigned in protest. When contacted I confirmed that I quit because my professional advice was not being heeded. Campaign researcher Celeste Cloutier indicated she resigned over what she considered “a disorganized and unstable environment.” Dan refused to comment.

Wednesday’s morning paper carried a story: “*Ricci campaign loses four staff members.*” The article outlined the various reasons for the resignations and

noted that a call to Ricci's office had not been returned. The afternoon edition of the paper carried another story. "*Ricci relieved by staff changeover.*" noting his campaign added a Catholic priest, Father Robert Allanach and the executive director at Elan, Sharon Terry to its staff.

Ricci claimed, "*People were getting too aggressive in making decisions without consulting the person who was running for office.*" He characterized his departed staffers as "*those who watch too many Robert Redford movies.*" He stressed his campaign was still in full swing.

That night Dan and I saw a report on television about a speaking engagement Ricci attended in Freeport that day. When local anchorwoman Morgan James, tried to speak with him about his campaign staff turnover, he got angry and left the event without talking to the group assembled at the restaurant waiting for him. The camera showed him jumping in a car and being driven away by Sharon Terry. Another scene showed the locks being changed at the campaign headquarters.

That same day Ricci called Brad Buck, his chief of security at Scarborough Downs, insisting he scan the campaign office from floor to ceiling for drugs he felt somebody had planted. Buck spent hours going over the building but found nothing.

Throughout all of this I was determined to stay the course and ride the turbulence. I threw myself into ad production and media buying for the track. I did not realize that Ricci was about to set off minefields everywhere.

At 2:30 a.m. the morning of May 14 Brad Buck was awakened at his home by an angry phone call. Ricci told him he had fired the track's presiding judge, Dick Herman, and wanted the track's security personnel to escort Herman from the premises when he showed up at the track the next day. Herman was the top-racing official at the Downs, responsible for enforcing state and national harness racing rules and regulations. Although Ricci alerted security about Herman's termination, he neglected to let anyone else know, including Herman or Eric. When Eric arrived at work the next morning, Herman wanted a reason for his termination, but nobody had any. Judge Herman's sudden ousting stunned the entire racing office, horsemen and women. They deluged Eric with inquiries, which he was helpless to answer.

On Wednesday and Thursday nights, May 14 and 15 there were two collisions during the races. Driving mishaps in harness racing are common but having two accidents two nights in a row was enough to create a major crisis for Ricci.

On Friday morning, Eric arrived at work and found seven separate memos from Ricci. Before he could read any of them, he was summoned to the track's conference room. Red faced, pacing and chain smoking, Ricci said Scarborough Downs was under siege. He had summoned the track's surface specialist, Dan Coons, representatives from Maine Harness Horseman's association, the United States Trotting Association, the Humane Society, and the FBI to a meeting that afternoon. Then he picked up the phone and called the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. He told the receptionist who answered. "My name is Joseph Ricci. I'd like to talk about the abuse of animals at Scarborough Downs. Could someone please call me back? It's urgent."

Ricci was obsessed that the two accidents and refused to acknowledge that dozens of accidents had happened in previous years. Ricci assembled members of the racing office and told them he found it "curious" that both accidents happened on the second turn. He was also concerned that there had been a carryover for nine days in May on the twin trifecta, "an alarming occurrence." When he briefly left the room, racing officials explained to Eric the reason there had never been an extended twin tri carryover was because it was the first year Scarborough Downs offered twin tri wagering in May.

Ricci returned carrying a salad from the kitchen, which he wanted Deanna to document via a memo. "This salad is not up to my standards," he told the racing officials. During the next three hours Ricci called in various employees to document stale bread and inferior food. Eric wondered what he was trying to prove, to whom and why.

That evening Eric called me at home to let me know what had happened that day when I had been doing work at a production studio. He said he sought some insights from Ricci's partner, Gerry Davidson, the psychiatrist who perhaps knew him better than anyone.

Eric explained to Davidson that he had a difficult time hiding how flabbergasted he felt, Davidson warned that "could exacerbate Joe's paranoia." Davidson, the vice president of the corporation that owned Scarborough Downs, and an expert

in mental health, advised him to stay away from Ricci. Davidson said he was going to try to get Ricci some help before it was too late.

Eric called Martha and told her that he needed a few days to assess his role as general manager. Then he called Karl Jannotta the race secretary, urging him to ride the ‘rockiness,’ and to tell the others to hang tight and do their jobs. He said he was going to be off for a few days, but assured him that things would get better, and he’d be back. “He’s self-destructing, so I can’t be angry at him,” Eric revealed. I’m angrier at Martha, his hired gun, who insists on making some sense out of his lunacy.”

Hank Burns, harness-racing columnist, for *Portland Newspapers* called me shortly after Eric, trying to track down the reason for Dick Herman’s firing. I told him I knew as little as anyone. “Well, I just got off the phone with Joe,” he revealed.

“He told me that his decision to fire Herman was totally personal and had absolutely nothing to do with his performance at the track. Then in the same breath he told me it was off the record and if I printed a word of it, he’d sue me, and he had tape recorders taping my call.” Hank continued, lowering his voice. “Can you tell me something, off the record, just for my own information? Has Joe gone nuts?”

The May 18 issue of *Maine Sunday Telegram* contained a harness racing column by Burns : He reminded his readers of a column he had written at the beginning of the racing season. “*Two weeks ago, we asked Joe Ricci this question: Who runs the Downs? He answered: ‘Eric runs the show. The secret is to let competent people make competent decisions.’*”

Hank’s column continued.

“*But the industry is in trouble if the management team at the Downs begins to look over its shoulders and worry about security. For example, two weeks ago Ricci called Maura Curley, ‘a creative genius.’ This past week Curley quit Ricci’s Democratic gubernatorial campaign staff. Just what effect will this have on her job at the Downs? If Curley goes, who will be next?*”

Ricci appeared at the radio station for his radio broadcast that night accompanied by Alice Quinn. He drew attention to Hank Burns column in that day’s paper.

“I have a most distorted journalism award to give out tonight,” he declared, citing Bruns’s columns and the reporter who caused him to abort this speaking engagement earlier in the week, because she asked about his departed campaign staff. “I wouldn’t talk to Morgan James, as you know. The film was very distorted. If they want to talk about issues. I’ll talk about issues,” he declared.

Then he added, “Here’s to you Morgan, for sloppy journalism” urging his audience to listen to the lyrics of the Dan Fogarty’s song “*Cuz, I saw It on TV*,” which he played over the air.

Other calls to the show that night included ones from Father Bob, and Sharon Terry. Sharon identified herself as a member of his campaign committee who had to call because she was so upset by the treatment Ricci had received that week from former staffers. Father Bob erroneously reported he had traveled throughout Maine working on the campaign.

“They’re pockets of very poor people who don’t even have running water, and no toilets,” he explained. “You might call them a silent majority in the state, and they really like what you’re saying. There are a lot of people out there behind you.”

Ricci thanked Father Bob and reiterated the theme that he was being persecuted.

He ended the broadcast defiant: “*I’m telling you boys who I’m running against- you keep throwing it, and I’ll keep catching it. But I’m gonna keep coming. I’m Joseph Ricci, saying, stay well, and fight back!*”

## **Chapter Twenty-Seven: The coup is complete**

Each day seemed to bring news of another extraordinary incident, more bizarre behavior.

Joe Ricci paced nervously around the Scarborough Downs grandstand a little before sunset on May 21. Just before post time he closed one of the concessions stands stating it was filthy. He ordered Brad Buck to send one of his security guards to the store to buy industrial strength cleaners. While the stand was being cleaned he gave away free food and apologized to customers for the filth.

He approached Brad Buck again, complaining there were more police than usual on the premises. He told him they were there trying to find a reason to shut down the track. Buck said there were no extra men on duty, just the standard two officers, required by Scarborough town ordinance.

Then Ricci said the betting areas were not marked as prescribed by company policy, and not enough signs were posted. He ordered a security guard to the store to buy thick black tape, and make signs: "*No one under the age of 16 allowed in the betting area.*"

Later Ricci approached one of the on-duty police officers and profusely apologized for having broken the law, assuring him it would never happen again. Neither Brad Buck nor the Scarborough police officer understood what laws had been broken.

I decided to avoid Joe until his volatility subsided. I spent my time doing ad production and traveling to my appointments, rather than have people meet me at the track. And I worked feverishly to make sure all my work was above reproach.

I went to my office at Scarborough Downs on Wednesday morning, May 22. Theresa, the usually cheery day receptionist, was pale and tense. She, like numerous other employees, had been the object of Ricci's terrorism for over a week, and was grimly holding on, fearful of what was coming next. She had heard from the previous night's receptionist that Ricci and Ed Marcello had a big fight in Ricci's track apartment, screaming loudly at each other. Afterwards

Marcello had gone up to the clubhouse dining room, and told waiters to put drinks and food on his tab. When it was pointed out that he didn't have a tab, he became indignant, and claimed he owned one quarter of the racetrack.

Linda went to comfort Ricci in his apartment, and called the upstairs bar, asking that two glasses of wine be delivered to them. When the nervous waiter knocked on the apartment door, Ricci opened the door with such a ferocious look on his face, the waiter jumped, and the tray with the glasses went crashing to the floor.

"It is just crazy here," Theresa warned, pointing out that Bobby Leighton, who had been appointed interim general manager in Eric's absence, was making life miserable, because Ricci was making impossible demands upon him.

"It's good you haven't been around," she observed. "But it's great that you're always telling me where you are and what you're doing, because Martha keeps calling for Joe to check up on you."

Moments after I went into my office and closed the door, Bobby Leighton approached me to ask questions concerning my ads and media buys, which I politely answered. Then he said Joe wanted extraneous time-consuming documentation that had never been required from me. Bobby had always been good-natured, ready with a smile, but then he was cold, regarding all those who perceived to be out of favor with Joe as the enemy.

I wondered if Bobby had totally forgotten the unyielding devotion to our jobs Eric and I demonstrated during the previous two seasons. Didn't he remember the eighty-hour weeks we worked? Could all our contributions be ignored simply because we'd suddenly fallen out of favor?

I told Bobby I was empathetic to his plight, but he didn't have to be a hit man for Joe Ricci. I told him I'd do my job as competently as I always had and be cooperative. Attempting to cut through the mindset that Ricci placed like a steel cast in the heads of all his workers, I told Bobby I wished Joe no harm, that I'd been initially angry after the convention because he abused people, but no more. "He's not well," I observed.

"I don't want to do anything that's going to increase his anger and neither do you, so let's try to work through this. I just want to be left alone to do the job I was hired to do."

A few minutes later, as I was driving out of the parking lot, I noticed a motorcade of autos approaching carrying Joe, Linda, Sharon, Alice, and Martha, the charter members of Joe's 'nodding committee.'

That afternoon I called Dan to let him know about the latest developments. He observed that Ricci tries to destroy people whom he thinks have rejected him, even though they just may not agree with him. "Right now, he seems to be dismantling any sense of structure, authority, or even sanity! He's getting rid of its piece by piece. It's frightening, and there's no telling where it'll end," Dan declared.

I said that perhaps our walking away in Waterville was a catalyst for his subsequent actions, a reaction to feeling our loss. Dan agreed that it might be true, but he was adamant that we didn't bear any of the responsibility for his behavior.

He said, "Joe has set the forces into motion, just like King Lear did, and only he can stop them."

The next night at Scarborough Downs was a relatively quiet Friday evening until a patron lost money on a race and became angry. He had wanted to change his bet but had been told he couldn't. In an agitated state, he approached Linda who was in the clubhouse dining room. A few races and drinks later, when his horse slipped on the rain-soaked track, he furiously sought out Linda again. Linda called security officers who escorted the guy outside to the parking lot. They told him it would be best if he had someone drive him home.

According to Brad Buck, the man, who had the physique of a body builder, became more agitated. He lunged at one of the officers grabbing him by the throat. More security personnel arrived, and wrestled him to the ground, finally handcuffing him. He claimed he couldn't breathe and was having an asthma attack, pleading with officers to take off his handcuffs. But once free from restraints, he was swinging away again. In the scuffle Brad Buck ripped his pants and broke his glasses before the man was taken away in a police car.

At 6:15 a.m. Brad Buck was awakened by a call from Joe Ricci. "Why are my patrons being brutalized?" he asked. Brad attempted to explain the previous night's incident in detail, but Ricci was not interested in hearing any facts. He

said, “If you don’t get with the program, you’ll end up like Linda,” telling him he terminated Linda’s employment because she called security. “If you allow Scarborough Police to make any more arrests on my property you’re fired,” he said before abruptly hanging up. Then John Campbell called Brad and instructed him to be at the clubhouse conference room at 3p.m.

Seven hours later, Martha, assistant controller Steve Leclair, John Campbell, Lt. William Zaccula of the Scarborough Police Department, and Brad Buck arrived. Ricci was waiting with a recording crew to document every word. He declared the Scarborough Police violated his patron’s constitutional rights by brutally attacking and arresting him. He said he promised to prove the man hadn’t been drunk and disorderly. He was going to order the guy to take a blood test to determine how much alcohol was in his system.

Brad Buck sat quietly through much of Ricci’s tirade, confident that he and the police department had acted appropriately. But when he heard that Ricci wanted to conduct an ‘independent blood test’ on the subject in question, more than fifteen hours after his arrest to see if he was intoxicated, he realized that Joe was irrational, no explanation was going to change his mindset.

Ricci’s said he wanted a guarantee that they’d be no more arrests at Scarborough Downs. The lieutenant said that was an impossible guarantee. Brad agreed and tried to plead with Ricci. “You’ve never doubted me before. I’ve always told you the truth, and I’m telling you now,” he said, explaining the physique of the patron in question, and his assault upon an officer, not once, but twice.

Ricci stared with eyes that screamed ‘betrayal.’ He repeated his ultimatum. “There will be no more arrests at Scarborough Downs.”

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Race Secretary Karl Janotta, and his assistant Don Knapton did not imagine the hail of abuse awaiting them when after they were summoned to the track’s conference room after the last race during Memorial Day weekend. They felt their jobs were secure, because both were good at what they did, and had earned the respect of drivers, trainers, and horse owners throughout the state.

Ricci’s face was contorted with anger when they arrived. He wanted to know

why they had scheduled the evening's feature race earlier in the program. He wanted the feature to be the second to the last race of the night, to keep the fans there. But Ricci had been ordering Bobby to stagger the races, allowing more time between them, a tool to increase bets, and concession and bar sales, and the races were getting over later and later. The feature race had run on some nights with an empty track. The assistant race secretary decided to schedule it a little earlier, so fans could see it. "How dare you tamper with that!" Ricci exclaimed, telling both men they were a disgrace to the state of Maine harness racing industry, incompetent and foolish.

After subjecting Don Knapton to about an hour of abuse, Ricci finally fired him. Karl Janotta, supportive of his assistant, offered his resignation.

The next night Ricci invited Father Bob and Sharon Terry to be guests on his radio show. During an hour, he rambled incoherently, hung up on callers, and acted so angry one could almost see him sneering. I listened to the broadcast on my car radio as I was returning from Massachusetts. When I got home my phone was ringing. Gerry Davidson had listened to the show and was aghast at the appearances of Sharon Terry, and Father Allanach.

"I had no idea Father Bob was that much under Joe's spell," he stated. He asked if I could help "avert a major public relations catastrophe" for Scarborough Downs.

"We're going to need serious public relations help after Wednesday," he stated, referring to the day he and Ricci and their attorneys were going to learn the sanctions handed out for actions toward Judge Selya. He feared that Ricci might "go wild in court" and further exacerbate an already awful situation.

Hank Burns, the harness-writing columnist called me after Davidson to let me know that he heard about the latest round of firings at the track. He had listened in disbelief to Ricci's ranting on the radio that night. He said that what was going on at the track and what was happening to this gubernatorial candidate was much more than a harness racing story.

"Let me read you the list of who's been fired or quit," he insisted.

"We have the presiding judge, race secretary, assistant race secretary, bar

manager, chef, chief of security, and gift shop manager already gone, a general manager who decided to go on vacation two weeks into the meet, and a director of marketing person who does all her work on the road, avoiding her office. What gives?"

Eric called next.

Despite the gravity of the circumstances he said he was trying to do the right thing and preserve the morale of the track even though he wasn't there. Eric told me Dick Poulos and John Campbell were freaked out about the hearing that Wednesday, fearing Joe Ricci could do anything inside or outside the courtroom.

The next day the headline: "*Personnel Bloodbath at Downs,*" ran in the sports page of the morning paper.

"*Heads continue to roll at Scarborough Downs,*" was the lead sentence followed by an account of who had officially been fired, resigned, or unofficially dismissed.

On Tuesday, May 27 I got a call from Alan Garber, Gerry Davidson's Massachusetts lawyer, who wanted information about my experience at Scarborough Downs, and with Ricci's campaign. Garber was vague about the type of action he was going to file on Davidson's behalf. After talking to him I had little hope that the situation at Scarborough was going to get better soon.

That night Eric called me, sounding calm, and in good humor. "Now that I've been away from Joe for more than a week my mind is becoming quite clear; the brainwashing techniques are starting to reverse themselves." Then he became serious. He said had written his resignation later that afternoon "I decided to write it before the personnel bloodbath includes me... I'm going to be held accountable for each problem, even if the problem wasn't a problem until Joe made some decisions during my absence ... I just don't want the stink of the shit to hit me when it goes down."

I asked Eric if his mind was really made up about his resignation. He said "I made the decision ten days ago that I never wanted to work for the guy again, regardless of whether things smooth over. The more I'm away from him I realize that his terror tactics are too much to put up with. It's just not worth it."

On the morning of Wednesday, May 28, Ricci, Gerry Davidson, and attorneys Poulos, Campbell, and Bergen appeared before Judge Bailey Aldrich for a hearing to determine sanctions for the motions filed by the attorneys earlier that month, leading to the abrupt postponement of the Key Bank trial.

Each of the three attorneys had retained his own counsel. The Portland legal community was buzzing with news of this unusual proceeding. Many lawyers from the law practices in that area stopped by the courthouse to witness the spectacle.

Aldrich had been designated by chief judge of the First Circuit of Appeals to preside over the hearing. The worst possible sanction would be the dismissal of Ricci and Davidson's four-year-old suit against the bank.

Ricci's New York attorney, Jonathan Moore, asked Aldrich to seal certain documents relating to Ricci's conversation with Poulos and Campbell. After he cited attorney client privilege Aldrich met Moore in his chambers and the hearing was continued until the next day.

Eric went to the courthouse that morning and gave John Campbell his resignation letter. When John gave Ricci the sealed envelope, he ripped it up in little pieces without even bothering to open it. He was in the foulest of moods that day, though he didn't 'explode' in court, as many feared.

That night Ricci went to his racetrack and ordered Downs' employee Andy Woodin, who programmed the tracks message board, to post statements about harassment by Scarborough Police.

About 8:30p.m. an elderly female fan fainted in the clubhouse and EMTs were called. When Ricci saw the unconscious woman on the floor being tended to by EMTs, he exploded. Convinced that the scene he was witnessing was a 'sham,' he went over to the woman lying on the floor and began screaming for her to get up. A waitress nearby says the scene was bizarre.

"Joe was waving his hands, screaming, and swearing at her, the sweat was pouring off him. He seemed totally detached from reality."

I left my house early on the morning of May 29 because I had scheduled radio ad

production at a studio in Portland. Eric tracked me down to tell me that John Campbell told him I was going to be fired that day. I wondered when and how because Ricci and his lawyers were already in court for the completion of the sanction hearing.

Later that morning the receptionist at Scarborough Downs called. “Joe is cancelling races tonight,” she revealed, explaining that Bobby Leighton had just told her to call all radio and TV stations and let them know that the races were being stopped “due to harassment.” She said, “I thought you should know, since you handle public relations.” I called Bobby and asked why he didn’t notify me. He said, “I’m just following orders from Joe.”

Reports on the six o’clock news promised to keep viewers abreast of the developing events at Scarborough Downs, while also relating that Judge Aldrich had not decided on whether to impose sanctions on Ricci and his lawyers.

Hundreds of horse owners, trainers and drivers filed into the track’s clubhouse early that evening along with members of the press and interested public. Striding up to the podium, surrounded by microphones from local TV and radio stations, Ricci began his performance.

He ranted about the actions of the Scarborough police, reinterpreting the events of the previous weeks, including the incident that resulted in the resignation of his own security chief. “I’ve fought hard for you over the years,” he told the horsemen saying they were not being represented fairly by their association’s directors. “I hope you understand I cannot operate a racetrack that is beneath the standards that I have set.”

He announced Scarborough Downs was officially for sale and said his lawyers had filed a petition to dissolve his partnership with Gerry Davidson at Elan.

He suggested a closed-door meeting with “just the rank-and-file horsemen.” But before kicking the associations’ directors and the press out of the room he launched an attack on the horseman’s association leadership stating: “I intend to sue each and every one of you directors personally for interfering with my business and creating an environment of strife.”

After the media and association leaders left the area, Ricci changed his mind and agreed to reopen the track the next night and continue the season's meet.

He seemed pleased with himself. He had gotten the MHHA membership to bar its own elected officials from their meeting with him. He controlled the association members and with his bluff of shutting down, permanently weakened the association's bargaining power.

About 10 p.m. that night I caught the end of a message left on my answering machine from Martha Amesbury.

"Maura, this is Martha. I'm calling to let you know that your services are no longer required at Scarborough Downs."

That night Joe reportedly narrowed his eyes, lowered his voice, and proclaimed to one of his lawyers: "The coup is complete."

## Chapter Twenty-Eight: A Roosevelt Democrat

Ricci finished last in the gubernatorial primary, with just three percent of the vote. It's anyone's guess whether he would have done better had he not alienated his campaign staff, fired his management team at Scarborough Downs, been accused of judicial blackmail, and ranted and raved on television and radio.

Yet until the day of the primary he insisted he was for the little guy, declaring: "I'm a Roosevelt Democrat." His archrival Jim Tierney became the party's nominee.

Ricci's partner Gerry Davidson, continued to stay in touch with me, though I was no longer employed by his company. At first, he assured me it would be only a matter of time before he'd take over and everyone could be back working at Scarborough Downs. But it became apparent Davidson was not going to wrestle anything from Joe Ricci.

In July Judge Bailey Aldrich fined Ricci, and Davidson \$50,000 for inappropriately attempting to recuse Judge Selya to get the trial postponed. In a thirty-three-page report Aldrich also issued a reprimand to attorney, Jim Bergen, noting he filed the recusal motion only after Selya declined to postpone the trial. Quoting Hamlet, Aldrich wrote: "*In court desperate diseases are not to be relieved by desperate appliances.*"

Ricci didn't mind the lashing he received from the elderly judge. He observed that the \$50,000 fine was simply "the price of doing business." He reasoned that if he won millions when the case got to court, it would have been a prudent investment.

By the end of August, the case had not received another court date so Judge Selya, decided not to be the judge for another term. "*My criminal docket is such that It will not permit me in the near term to the devote the necessary time to the case,*" he wrote. Ricci's lawyers were ecstatic. Joe Ricci had won another round through clever maneuvering. His recusal motion got him both a continuance and a new judge.

Finally, *60 Minutes* kicked off its fall season on Columbus Day weekend with

the story: “*Joe Ricci is a Marked Man.*” The segment portrayed Ricci as victim, emotionally devastated by the cruel and unfounded rumors about him. Most of the piece centered on Ricci’s interview with Ed Bradley and how he had been irreparably harmed by the bank.

Ed Bradley was shown interviewing two ex-Elan residents who confirmed that they had been approached by investigators from the attorney general’s office intent on discrediting Ricci. Shoppers at the Maine Mall told Bradley there might be “something dishonest” about Joe Ricci.

No mention was made that possibly the public’s perception could be the result of actual stories and investigations concerning Elan that occurred long before Joe Ricci’s difficulties with the bank. Or could it have been Ricci’s ownership of a racetrack and his excessive lifestyle and public shenanigans, which caused people to have less than a wholesome impression of him?

The morning after the *60 Minutes* broadcast aired the *Portland Newspapers* ran a story indicating Ricci was relieved the “truth was finally told.” The next Sunday harness racing columnist Hank Burns noted that once and for all “*the myths about Joe Ricci had been laid to rest.*”

If Ricci’s antics alienated people before the show, after it aired many were forgiving. Even some of those who had been the object of his rage, were seduced by the story they saw on the world’s most well-known news show. That might have been because the portrait of Joe Ricci viewers was fed that night was a lot easier to understand, than the Joe Ricci they experienced.

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The following spring, on March 3, 1987 the case of Joseph Ricci and Gerald Davidson et al vs Key Bank finally went to trial in Portland, Maine. Once again Joe Ricci was front-page news and the lead story on nightly newscasts. Everybody was interested in his \$41 million lawsuit against one of the state’s largest banks.

A pool of nearly a hundred potential jurors was called into the federal courthouse in Portland from which the six-member civil jury and three alternates were chosen. James L. Watson from New York, a judge on the U.S. International

Court of Trade, presided over the trial, having been specially assigned to the case by U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice William Rehnquist. Watson was a folksy African American judge given to humorous comments that relieved the tension in the courtroom.

The trial involved over four dozen witnesses and extensive exhibits. But the claim itself was simple: Ricci and Davidson alleged that the bank's termination of their credit violated state and federal laws, because it was discriminatory. They claimed that the actions of the bank caused them millions of dollars of loss to their multiple businesses.

Alan McCausland, an economist from New Hampshire, computed a loss of more than \$3.5 million in Elan profits with a projection of \$17 million in losses by the year 2000.

McCausland was paid \$70,000 to compute a schedule of economic losses and fly to Maine to be an expert witness. This consultant who specializes in estimating damages in court cases also testified Scarborough Downs lost \$600,000 in revenues because the track was unable to pave its parking lot or install a new betting system, due to the bank's refusal to grant a \$125,000 loan.

Bank lawyers disagreed that the bank's actions were responsible for decline in enrollment at Elan. Instead, they cited poor management, and fallout from the 1975 Illinois investigation by the Division of Child and Family Services. Ricci's lawyers rebutted. They produced an expert witness from Illinois who testified Elan had a ninety percent success rate.

The bank's attorneys should have introduced the more recent damning report regarding Elan done in 1981 by the child advocate's office in Rhode Island. It substantiated that there was no basis whatsoever for Elan's inflated claims of success with its residents.

By attributing Elan's declining population in 1982 to the Illinois report six years earlier, the bankers missed the mark. They should have used an expert who could explain how states are prohibited from sending their kids to Elan because it has been found to violate a child's civil rights. (This irony would have been worth pondering for the jury, considering that Joe's \$41 million lawsuit was for civil rights violations.)

The suit also charged the bank with intentional infliction of emotional distress, and paraded witnesses who supported Ricci's contention that the bank nearly destroyed his self-esteem. In a sworn pre-trial deposition Linda Smeaton testified that she and Joe hadn't had sexual relations for eleven months and their love life had suffered because the bank action's created anxiety for her partner.

Betty Lockwood, a therapist who said she treated Ricci from 1978 to 1985, testified that Ricci was abandoned by his parents as an infant and left in the care of Italian immigrant grandparents who didn't read or write and often treated him harshly. Like so many others, Betty Lockwood, didn't question what Joe Ricci told her. By blindly believing his false story about being raised by immigrants who could neither neither read nor write, and repeating it to the jury, she perpetuated the lie.

Juror Elaine Curry, a forty-four-year-old real estate broker from York, Maine said it was Ms. Lockwood's testimony that impressed her most and made her feel compassion for Joe Ricci.

"Hearing how the grandparents who raised him couldn't speak English and even make a bus transfer to go see him when he was in the hospital was terrible. It must have been awful for him to be in the hospital after his car accident as a teenager, and have no visitors," she observed.

Yet Ricci's aunt Josephine "Chubby" from Port Chester, New York told me that Joe's grandmother who spoke Italian, perfect English and even Yiddish, visited her grandson every day when he was recuperating from his car accident at Burke's Rehabilitation center in White Plains.

Under questioning by Ricci's attorneys Ms. Lockwood also told the jury Ricci had "gotten hooked on heroin," went to a treatment facility and learned that he had "a great deal of intelligence and a great deal of anger at having been abandoned." She said that Joe learned he could help others with drug problems, and he began doing that as a staff member in a community rehab center.

Ms. Lockwood testified that she attempted to help Ricci with some underlying personal problems, which included "a lack of self-esteem, depression, and problems with impulse control, paranoia, and difficulty in interpersonal relationships."

Under cross-examination from Burns, Lockwood, conceded that Ricci was phobic, paranoid, jealous, depressed, felt threatened, was anxious, angry, suspicious, feared for his safety, was a hypochondriac, and suicidal, even before the bank's actions. She also admitted, "He has a paranoid personality."

Ms. Lockwood's description of the fragile state of her patient's mental state came just two days after Ricci's partner Dr. Gerry Davidson testified that Elan had made him and Ricci multi-millionaires.

Davidson unapologetically acknowledged Elan's astounding success, which had both men taking a salary of \$757,984 in 1982.

Davidson testified that Ricci, once a troubled youth, went through a drug rehabilitation program and subsequently became the role model for Elan students. Explaining the social structure at Elan he stated: "All societies have a chain of command. At Elan Joe Ricci is the general."

It is worth pondering, why no juror, parent or healthcare professional questioned the wisdom of having someone with Ricci's abnormal personality acting as the role model for troubled adolescents?

The trial went on the entire month of March and into April. Each new day brought a parade of witnesses and spectators, and reports of sparring among the lawyers.

Harold Hagopian, the court reporter, recalled that in his many years in court, he's never witnessed such a drama. He says the Maine jury didn't know quite what to make of Ricci's savvy litigators who, except for Richard Poulos and John Campbell, came from Boston, Hartford, and New York City.

Most of the jury, comprised of clerks, a secretary, a mechanic, and other working people, had never been exposed to anyone like Joe Ricci and had difficulty following the claims of such enormous financial loss. Some had never set foot in a courtroom before.

One former employee of Ricci's who watched the trial observed. "Joe gave the performance of a lifetime. He was the underdog, the self-made hero who had been exploited by bankers born with silver spoons in their mouths. He played the

role to the hilt, was charismatic as hell. De Niro couldn't have done it better."

Taking the stand Ricci expressed a gamut of emotion from pensive sadness to righteous indignation. At one point he exploded, telling bank lawyer, Thomas Burns, a silver haired Bostonian: I have total disdain for you."

Many observers felt Burns made the mistake of smiling smugly to the jury, and intimidating Joe's motherly therapist. Burns also had a knack for talking pedantically, even instructing the working-class jury to "remember your Latin." "Burns played right into Joe's hands," observes one spectator. "He came across as abrasive and nasty. He just wasn't likeable. I think that damaged the bank's case.

"Ricci and Davidson's lead counsel, Robert Axelrod, a stocky Connecticut lawyer was more down to earth. Referring to Burns, years after the trial Axelrod told me.

"The more he got on his high horse, the more I got on my low horse, and that was exactly my plan. If you say it was the Latin that got him, I think you may be right. It was the Latin that got him."

Near the final leg of the trial in early April lawyers for both sides had lengthy discussions in Watson's chambers about the admission of evidence concerning Ricci's use of cocaine. After Judge Watson allowed bank lawyers to raise the issue, Davidson testified that he referred Joe to a fellow psychiatrist. When Burns asked him if he was "concerned that Ricci's use of cocaine was putting Elan and your fortune at risk." Davidson simply replied, "Yes." Davidson professed not to know how much or how long Ricci had been using cocaine, how much money he spent on drugs, or how long he was under treatment with a psychiatrist.

Burns also asked Davidson about his prescribing the painkiller Talwin for Ricci when it could cause drug dependency, hallucinations, anxiety, and other side effects. Axelrod objected to Burns remarks, asserting that Talwin is a legitimate pain-killing drug, and it had been legitimately prescribed for Ricci's problems stemming from his auto accident as a teenager.

After twenty-four days of testimony both Axelrod and Burns geared up for their

closing arguments leaving the results of the seven-week trial in the hands of the jurors.

Burns characterized the bankers' actions as prudent, based upon the information they received from a most reliable source - the FBI. Axelrod described Joe as a self-made man who was the victim of a "dirty little slimy rumor."

After the closing arguments, Judge Watson asked the jurors to decide whether the bank should be held liable for defamation, intentional infliction of emotional distress, breach of contract, breach of the duty of good faith and fair dealing, and violation of the federal Equal Opportunity Act.

As soon as the jury had left the room, Ricci demanded that his lawyers make a motion for a mistrial because the jury was not told the net worth of Key Bank. Watson quickly dismissed this motion, stating that he would provide that information to the jurors only if they decided that punitive damages were in order.

On Monday, April 13, after nearly three days of deliberation the jury was ready with a verdict. Ricci rushed to the courthouse, dressed in jeans, a sweatshirt and suede jacket. The jury awarded Ricci and Davidson and their companies a whopping \$15 million in compensatory damages - the largest award ever given in the state of Maine.

The jurors found the bank in violation of the Equal Opportunity Act by not giving an adequate explanation of the decision to terminate credit, and found it also guilty of breach of contract, and intentional infliction of emotional distress.

The initial award was broken down to include \$7 million for Joe Ricci, \$2 million for Gerry Davidson, and \$6 million for their businesses, Golden Ark Enterprises. The jury said it also found in favor of punitive damages and planned to decide the award amount the following day.

Outside on the courthouse steps, surrounded by television cameras, microphones, and reporters, Joe was ecstatic. He had his Stetson hat pulled down over one eye and looked dramatically different from the businessman in expensive suits seen at the seven-week trial. He told the press that the verdict was "a victory for civil rights."

Looking straight into the camera he promised to use some of his newly acquired millions to set up a center for constitutional rights, and a non-profit weekly newspaper focusing on civil rights.

“I think the people of Maine made a statement about rights, he stated.

The next day the jury awarded an additional \$12.5 million in punitive damages, but Judge Watson set aside that award. He explained that he didn’t feel the plaintiffs proved by “clear and convincing” evidence that the bank acted with malice when it terminated credit based upon the false rumor from the FBI.

Ricci was not upset about having the additional millions taken away. He and his lawyers hoped to use that amount as leverage. Axelrod said his team would not appeal the loss of the punitive damages if the bank would not appeal the \$15 million award.

Nevertheless, Axelrod was dramatic when addressing the jury before the punitive amount was awarded. He urged them to send “a shining beacon from this very room that’s going to tell the banking world that they can’t do this anymore.” He said that what happened to his clients could happen to anyone, but most people would not have the “courage, gumption and finances to stand up to the wrong use of authority.”

Despite its initial assurances that it would appeal the jury’s award, the bank chose to settle three and a half months after the verdict. The negotiated terms were \$10 million cash and a \$5 million interest free loan.

Four years after the trial the bank’s trial attorney, Thomas Burns, was still incredulous.

“The bank settled against my advice. It was insane to settle that case because it wouldn’t have stood up five minutes on appeal. The bank panicked and threw money at him because it was concerned about the post judgment interest. It was going through mergers and didn’t want the debt on the books. Joe Ricci brainwashed everyone in southern Maine for years about that case. It was a total, utter miscarriage of justice. He never had a dime’s worth of damage.”

Judge Watson had been a judge for twenty-five years, grew up in Harlem, was

wounded serving in an all-black army in World War II, and was vice president of NAACP in New York. Despite his stature as a federal judge who had dealings with LBJ and the Kennedys, he never acted self-important.

Speaking to me via telephone from his Manhattan office, he was candid, but careful in recalling his perceptions of the trial, which he says was one of his most memorable.

Asked whether he was surprised by the verdict, he hesitated for a moment, chuckled, and then simply answered “Yes.” Some of his statements about Joe Ricci whom he considered “a very interesting man” were not for attribution. But speculating about the reasons for the jury’s decision to award such an enormous sum in the case, he observed: “I think it was the old parable of David and Goliath.” Watson revealed he wanted to settle that case, and it could have been settled in the early stages of the trial for \$2 million, but the bank wouldn’t agree.

Few jurors thought that Ricci would get much money or even realized that he indeed got the money. Most stated they hadn’t followed post trial accounts in the press. Ironically it was their lack of knowledge about current affairs that made these people acceptable jurors. Only those who hadn’t seen *60 Minutes* or followed accounts of the Maine gubernatorial race were chosen.

Juror Elaine Curry, who says she felt compassion for Ricci during the trial, said deciding on awarding damages was “overwhelming.” She observed “We weren’t accountants or big business executives... Most of us were average citizens who never dealt with that kind of money before. It was tough to figure it all out because it was all so detailed.”

## **PART V**

## Chapter Twenty-Nine: I'm a fuckin' animal

Despite securing a stunning victory and an amazing sum of money, Joe Ricci did not change.

Accounts of his actions since his historic victory in court tell a frightening saga of continued drug abuse and aberrant behavior. He reneged on his promises to use the millions the jury awarded to start a non-profit paper and set up a center for constitutional law to help people with civil rights violations.

Though an article in a December 1987 issue of *The New York Times* indicated that Ricci's center was already operating in South Portland, and a paper was in the works, neither materialized.

John Cole, former publisher of *Maine Times*, read about Ricci's plan to start an altruistic newspaper and offered to help. Cole told me, "Joe said he wanted a populist publication that would address things like day care, fair housing, employment for working people." At Ricci's request he developed personnel a budget, article profiles, and other elements for the pending publication. He even hired an artist to design a banner for the new publication to be called "*Mainstay*." But after Cole completed various tasks, Joe canceled meetings. Eventually Cole's calls were ignored. Cole said he decided one day "to make one last effort to reach Joe and get the paper off the ground." He drove to Ricci's house, left his name with the housekeeper, and asked that Ricci let him know what he intended. Cole said, "He never called me, never said he was sorry he changed his mind, and wasted all my time."

Eric Moynihan returned to work at Scarborough Downs during the summer of 1987, a couple of months after the Key Bank trial. He believed that Joe would be kinder with the pressures of the trial behind him, his flattering portrayal on *60 Minutes* and his \$15million award. But he was wrong.

After resigning from the track in 1986 Eric had gone to work for a prominent developer but preferred the excitement of the racetrack. When Ricci called suggesting he get back into the harness racing industry Eric agreed. "Joe told me he was sorry for what he had done to me. I couldn't believe he apologized. He told me he couldn't trust anyone at that time. I believed him. I thought the guy

had come around. His eyes were clear, and he was different. I figured he was off drugs.”

Eric was offered a three-to-five-year contract, at the same \$40,000 he was making when he left. But when he got his first paycheck, he discovered he was getting just \$30,000. When he mentioned this, he was told it was a ‘budgetary problem’ and was promised a \$5,000 bonus at the end of the season.

“I realized halfway through the season that I made a mistake.” I was naive enough to think Joe changed and wanted me back to do a good job. But then when I saw the parties, the heavy drinking, and the drugs. It was the same bad scene all over again.”

April Bishop, a nineteen-year-old receptionist at the track with whom Ricci had become intimately involved observed, “Joe was much worse after he won his case against the bank and got all those millions. He thought everybody wanted some of his money.” She says he felt obligated to buy new BMWs for Sharon Terry and Alice Quinn and had promised to give a large sum of money to Linda Smeaton.

On August 12, less than two weeks after Ricci signed a settlement agreement with the bank, Linda Smeaton was on the way home from Scarborough Downs at 2a.m. when she was hit head on by a driver in a pick-up truck. The man who hit her died. Linda suffered severe leg injuries, and probably would have died as well, if not for the air bag in her Mercedes.

April Bishop recalled that Ricci and Linda had been barely talking before the accident. But that fateful night Joe, Linda, April, and a group of others had been drinking in the clubhouse lounge after the races. “Joe kissed Linda goodbye and even walked her to her car, which was very unusual because he hardly ever kissed her in public. I wouldn’t say Linda was drunk. I think she had a good buzz on. She could put away her wine.”

A while later a Downs’ security guard appeared and told Ricci he had a call. April ended up taking the call and she and Ricci went to the hospital and found Linda in bad shape, suffering from shock. Linda had emergency surgery and ended up spending weeks in the hospital and months in rehabilitation.

During this time April says she spent a lot of time at Blackstrap Road, talking with Ricci and listening to music. Though her relationship with Joe had been intimate, she contends that sex was not a major factor. She says she didn't think he was very sexual, that he preferred a non-sexual relationship with a woman. She said that was fine because she was fascinated by his mind.

In candid but sometimes halting conversation April, a wholesome looking young woman from northern Maine, outlined her own devastating relationship with Joe Ricci, which lasted about a year. "I would have done anything for him. I loved him more than anything in the world. I totally abandoned my family. I didn't see them for a year and a half...I had never been more loyal to any one person in my life."

After Ricci received his multi-million-dollar settlement with the bank he gave April \$4,000. (She was earning \$5.50 an hour) But just a few days later he suspended her from her job for three weeks without pay, insisting she was having an affair with Eric, which wasn't true. "I was miserable," April confided. She drank constantly, couldn't sleep, and never heard a word from Ricci. After the track closed for the season, toward the end of September she went back to work. Ricci cornered her in the parking lot, waiting by her car. "He was angry. He said 'Listen, if you're gonna do that shit, just take it in my apartment.' Then he said 'I've heard it from everybody around here. You've really pissed me off.' I asked him what he was talking about, and he started rattling off names of guys I supposedly had sex with right in the open in the clubhouse. I couldn't believe it. I said 'Joe what are you talking about? I haven't done anything with anybody.' It really hurt that he didn't believe me."

Ricci wouldn't talk to her. Then one day he suggested she come over to his house and share champagne. Once there, she wanted to discuss his awful accusations. He told her not to worry, that he never really believed them. The topic was closed.

During the winter of 1987 Ricci was busy deciding what to do with the \$15 million he secured from Key Bank. He took several trips to Arizona and Texas to investigate starting another Elan in a warmer climate. He also went to Hollywood to see about getting a movie made about his life. He'd come back from these trips with stories of having talked to Martin Scorsese, and Clint Eastwood.

In March of 1988 Ricci offered April Bishop a promotion for the upcoming season at Scarborough Downs. He told her he wanted her to oversee group functions. In addition to the promotion, he said he was going to buy her a new car and told her to order a loaded red Mazda RX 7. He was going to pay for it but then decided he was just going to give her \$2,000 for the down payment, which meant she had to finance \$18,000. But Ricci told her not to worry, that he was going to increase her salary from \$5.50 an hour to \$400 a week.

April was excited about her new job and image. After her raise and new car, she got her first credit card, and charged \$1,300 for new clothes. She didn't really know what Joe had in mind for the sales and marketing effort but was determined to do a good job and succeed. Ricci took her out for drinks to discuss her new position. He told her "Just do the best you can do, and we'll take from there." He said he was planning on starting another Elan in Florida, and that they could go there together, "and leave everything behind."

Less than two weeks later Ricci instructed Bobby Leighton to fire April. She was never given any reason for her termination. Ricci wouldn't discuss it. She was abruptly left with no money for rent, her credit card bill, or payments on her new Mazda. While she was looking for a job that summer, her car was repossessed. Then she had no car at all, having used her old vehicle as part of the Mazda's down payment.

When the Scarborough Downs racing season opened in May of 1988 Ricci was reportedly using cocaine frequently. Eric couldn't believe that he had returned to work just a year ago thinking he had changed. He worried about the new season because Sharon Terry, Marty Kruglik, a former Elan resident and staffer and Alice Quinn went to work at Scarborough Downs. Ricci endowed them with positions of authority, thought they knew nothing about harness racing.

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Controller Steve Leclair had been fired over the winter. Ricci told everyone he had embezzled thousands of dollars from the company and systematically purged the computer to cover his crime. Employees who had been waiting for their end of the year bonuses were not paid because of this. Yet everyone familiar with the incident says that no crime ever took place. Leclair applied for unemployment benefits. An interim controller answered a questionnaire from the

Department of Employment Security, confirming he had been terminated. Ricci's lawyers, Stephanie Anderson, and Claudia Sharon were angry because Ricci didn't want to pay unemployment compensation. The interim controller quit after Ricci lambasted him for not writing "embezzlement" as the cause for his termination.

A secure money room behind the mutuel line contained a huge safe with alarm systems. Cash was counted after the races and stored there before armed guards came and transferred the money to the bank each morning.

But in early 1988 Ricci decided to discard the money room, and the existing cash handling procedures. Instead, all the money was transferred to the administrative offices on the second floor of the clubhouse. Only Ricci, Linda Smeaton, Sharon Terry, and Alice Quinn had access to the area, while cash was being counted.

Ricci changed procedures regarding collection of money from all the concessions as well, demanding that receipts were turned in after every race. On one occasion an elderly woman, who had been working at the track for several years, did not include a slip in one of her cash totals. When Ricci found out, he told Eric to fire her. Eric learned that she was making the slip out, but an impatient security guard picking up the money refused to wait. Regardless of her reasons, Ricci still wanted her fired.

Then on the evening on May 16 much of the madness brewing erupted. Eric was behind the mutuel line with Bobby Leighton when Ricci appeared.

Eric said, "Joe was apparently whacked out on something, sweating profusely, and dragging on a cigarette when all of a sudden, a smile came over his face, like the mysteries of life had suddenly been revealed to him."

He grabbed the telephone. Dialing someone he didn't address by name, he told him there was a meeting scheduled for after midnight at Scarborough Downs, declaring, "I want you to bring the shotgun, and load it for bear." Then whirling around to Eric, he growled, "And I want you there." Eric attended the 12:30 a.m. meeting with Bobby Leighton and Lloyd Johnson. Ricci appeared with Sharon Terry in tow.

"He just kept saying things like 'I don't ever want you to do what you're doing

again'. But nobody knew what it was that we were supposed to stop doing." He said "Joe kept threatening to fire all of us. He was totally covered with sweat and worked himself into a frenzy. Finally, he jumped up and shouted at the top of his lungs in a deafening roar ' I'm a animal. Don't' you forget it. I'm a animal. But then within a matter of seconds, he seemed to gain composure and added ' well not really.' That's when I said to myself, 'It's time for me to go home, round fifteen is over.' I quit the next day."

With other managers out of the picture Ricci deluged Bobby Leighton with demands. Bobby collapsed behind the mutuel line one afternoon and was taken by ambulance to the hospital. Upon leaning the news, Ricci reportedly exclaimed: "See what they did to Bobby!"

## Chapter Thirty: Eumenides

I hadn't heard from Ricci in more than a year and a half, when he called me in August of 1987, just ten days after settling with the bank for \$15 million. He told me Eric Moynihan had returned to the track and asked if I'd be interested in doing some public relations for his new center for constitutional law. I wished him success but declined. He called a few more times. I finally agreed to have lunch. We met at Sapporo, a Japanese restaurant in Portland. At the time I had no inkling that he had just finished terrorizing Eric Moynihan, whom I hadn't talked to in many months.

During lunch Joe Ricci told me he had changed since we parted ways. I wanted to believe him, but something didn't ring true. Sipping sake he declared, "I am the victim of hedonistic women," He seemed strangely unmoved by Linda's near-death experience, which occurred only a few weeks earlier. In fact, he seemed annoyed by it, telling me it had disrupted their plans to separate. After we had lunch, I observed to Dan there seemed to be "something even more insidious about Joe than before."

The following spring, I read about more chaos at Scarborough Downs. I wondered if others could be forewarned, and if I could somehow do that. I realized there was a whole lot more to the Joe Ricci story, and that putting all the pieces together wouldn't be easy. But I had no idea in the spring of 1988 what I would discover from nearly three years of research, what I would learn from Ricci's relatives and childhood pals, his ex-wife, former lovers, employees, residents of Elan, and especially from his own business partner, Gerry Davidson. I also didn't anticipate that as I researched Joe Ricci's past, new dramas would emerge, and I'd have to keep up with them.

News of my impending book about Joe spread. John Campbell called to tell me I was "walking a fine line" and should be careful. He said he was calling "in the official capacity of Joe's lawyer," but joked that he and Linda Smeaton could write a dramatic story of their own.

Then the phone rang late one evening. "You've created quite a stir," the familiar voice announced. It was Gerry Davidson, chuckling and observing that if Ricci wanted a book written about him, he would write it himself, or pay someone to

do it the way he thought it should be done.

Suddenly becoming serious Davidson declared: “A book about Joe could be extremely important in helping people understand the amount of damage that can be done by a psychotic person, or a person driven by rage. Joe is a genius. He could have been a great person.” He characterized his longtime partner as “very methodical” and “crazy like a fox.”

After a newspaper article revealed I was writing a book about Joe Ricci I began getting strange phone calls. When I answered there would be silence or music in the background. Several times I thought I was being followed. Once Dan and I confronted a person in a car who had trailed us for more than two hours. When we asked why he had been at all our stops during a single afternoon, he just smiled and sped away.

Then I began receiving phone calls and letters from ex-Elan residents, and employees of Ricci’s businesses with chilling accusations. Some for the record, others not. Many were afraid to speak fearing reprisals.

When we began to realize the extent of Joe Ricci’s influence over so many lives, Dan and I decided to leave Maine, so I could write without fear. We sold our house in the summer of 1988, put many items in storage, and moved with our son to Montreal. We told nobody except close relatives where we were living.

I slipped in and out of Maine, for interviews. Twice Dan and I traveled to Joe Ricci’s hometown of Port Chester, New York. We also tracked down former Elan residents, employees, and others in at least ten different states.

I traveled to Maine in mid-August of 1988 to interview April Bishop at Horsefeathers restaurant in the Old Port, just a hundred yards from the law offices of Poulos and Campbell. We had lunch and talked with a small tape recorder placed on the table. She said she had never told anyone except her psychiatrist about Joe Ricci’s effect on her.

She worked two jobs during the summer of 1988 to pay off debts she accrued after being fired from Scarborough Downs the previous winter. She worked as a secretary at a Portland law office by day, and a group residence for people with disabilities at night. Without a car she was forced to move from Scarborough

where she had relocated to be closer to the track.

Despondent over financial problems, and her soured relationship with Joe Ricci she sought the help of a psychiatrist but had to stop the sessions, because she didn't have the money to pay for them. One night, after a bout of drinking, she slit her wrists. Fortunately, a friend discovered her, and managed to stop the bleeding.

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Westchester County, New York, with its posh shopping centers, and arts organizations, is corporate headquarters for some of the nation's corporate giants such as like PepsiCo, Readers Digest and Texaco. Nearly half of the land is rolling hills, green pastures, and perfectly manicured lawns. Only four percent of the terrain is used for factories, stores, and offices.

Port Chester, where Joe Ricci grew up, is a small factory town within this county. Bordering the affluent town of Rye, it cradles the shores of Long Island Sound. Port Chester and the town of Rye form the bedroom community for New York City with nearly 100,000 residents, making the half hour daily commute to work in Manhattan.

In 1990 the main street in Port Chester had the feel of the 1950s. There were many faded facades and shabby storefronts that seem frozen in another era.

Neilsen's luncheonette, which has been a town landmark for decades, still sold cherry cokes and banana splits at its soda fountain. The town also had its share of seedy bars where you could shoot pool, but a few expensive restaurants like Pastore's Due Fratelli on North Main Street offered upscale entrees, such as fresh snapper, for \$23.95.

Many residents of the predominately Italian community have lived and worked in Port Chester all their lives. Arnold Bakery, and the Life Saver candy factory on Westchester Avenue employed generations of workers from the same families.

Many of Joe Ricci's relatives, both the Riccis and the Santoros still lived in Port Chester and the surrounding towns of Mamaroneck and White Plains. There

were one hundred and fourteen Riccis in the Westchester County phone book, related either by blood or by marriage.

Joe's aunt Josephine Martello "Chubby," and her husband Vinnie still lived on Fox Island Road across from the modest little house where Ricci grew up. Ricci's aunt, then in her sixties spoke with me, claiming everything in that house at 44 Fox Island Road was kept spotless by Joe's dedicated grandmother. No rat infested filth as Joe Ricci later described.

Frank Salvatore, then in his fifties, remembered Joe Ricci as "the guy who made it big in Maine." Nicknamed "The Hawk," he was just six years older than Joe but recalled drinking with Joe's father, Bamboo. Salvatore told me where to find "Chubby" who worked at Antonio's Pizza Parlor in a little shopping mall in town. I met her in the tiny kitchen in the back of the parlor where she was banging heads of iceberg up against a steel counter, then spreading the leaves into plastic salad bowls.

She suggested I call her after she got off work. She gave me her sister Ann's address and phone number. "Speak with Joey's mother Anne," she urged. Ricci mother, Ann Kent, lived just a few minutes from Antonio's and a couple of blocks from Fox Island Road. She wasn't home but her daughter, Michelle connected us later.

Speaking with me by telephone she was cautious. "I don't want to talk to you without checking with Joe," she said, fear rising in her voice. But when asked to sum up her son she observed.

"He is a very compassionate human being who has been generous to me and his sisters. If people could really get to know Joe, and not believe all the awful things about him they would see what a kind person he is. I don't think I should be talking to anyone from Maine because everybody in that state has crucified him. I don't want to be responsible for any more hurt in his life."

When I called 'Chubby' later, she told me she was sorry, but couldn't talk. "My sister told me to shut up," she declared, adding, "Joey claimed he didn't know anything about your book, so Ann told me not to say another word."

Before I hung up, she said "I wish I could talk to you. People have misconceptions about who Joey is, so maybe if somebody talked to his relatives,

talked to his friends, and really learned about the trouble he had, they would appreciate who he is now. I'm sorry, but I must live in the same town as my sister. And I guess Joey told her: ' If anyone is going to write a book about Joe Ricci, it will be Joe Ricci.'" Pausing for a moment she stated, "Joey certainly wasn't in the Mafia, but I kind of wish some of my family had been. Maybe if they had I wouldn't be stuck at my age in some crummy kitchen making salads."

I said nothing, but wondered if she knew how much money her nephew had, and how lavishly he spent it on his extravagant lifestyle. I realized she could never even imagine spending \$100 for a bottle of wine and would be horrified at dropping \$10,000 in one night at a roulette wheel in Las Vegas as Joe's ex-wife recalled he did.

Chubby's daughter Andrea was eight years younger than Ricci, and still looked up to her famous cousin. She told me she hadn't seen Ricci in years, "except on *60 Minutes*."

"Anyone who ever knew Joe Rich remembers him. You just don't forget Joe Rich. He played a large part in my life. He would always make me laugh and explain things to me when I was feeling down. We'd go up to the attic-that was his room- and we'd play records. Joe was a hip dude. He was cool when cool was cool."

Andrea said she never visited her cousin in Maine. She said "We've never been invited. He doesn't call us. He went away, and that was it. I think when he left, he wanted to leave Port Chester where Port Chester is. I think everybody is afraid to talk to you. You know they're not going to say bad things. They don't want to get into trouble. They don't want to hear nothing from him. But I have good memories of Joe. Maybe I had a crush on him even. My cousin was good looking." Before hanging up she said, "If you ever get through to Joe, tell him Andrea says 'hello.' Tell him I'm still alive."

Ricci's union card signed on February 3, 1966 was still on file at Arnold Bakery, but union president Felix Bakija, who had been with the company for many years, insisted Ricci wasn't active in the union whose membership was mandatory for all employees. He said that Joe Ricci certainly didn't start the union as he stated in one of his newspaper ads when he was running for governor. The Arnold Bakery union, known as the Brick Oven Association, was

founded in 1947 when Ricci was just two years old.

At the Don Bosco Community Center, just a block from Fox Island Road, Victor Donato, wearing a Don Bosco tee shirt and a whistle around his neck, offered me stacks of scrapbooks with yellowed newspaper clippings. Donato said he missed seeing Ricci *on 60 Minutes* but said, “Some of the guys in the neighborhood taped it.”

He was curious about Ricci. He wanted to know more about his lawsuit against the bank, and the place called Elan. He was impressed with his winning \$15 million in court, but said it really wasn’t that shocking: “Joe was always very convincing. It shouldn’t have been too much trouble for him to convince twelve people he should get \$15 million.”

More surprising than anything else to Donato was that Ricci made his fortune helping troubled adolescents. He said It would be great to get him back to the community center for a visit. He wondered whether he might want to help some of the kids at Don Bosco, by making a little contribution to the place that benefited him in his youth.

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I spoke with Eric Moynihan two weeks before Christmas of 1988. He said times were tough for him. He had made repeated calls to Ricci asking for the two-year end bonuses he had been promised. He finally reached him one evening at home, and said they had an ‘emotional’ conversation. “He finally agreed to pay me the money he promised. He told me he’d send me \$2,000 a week for five weeks. I got one check, and I fully expect I’ll never hear from him again.”

Eric told me Gerry Davidson said he was considering taking some sort of legal action against his partner. He asked for his cooperation as he had two years earlier. The psychiatrist observed that if Eric didn’t reveal the improprieties at Scarborough Downs, people would think he was part of the shenanigans with “women and things.” But Eric told me his conscience was clear, he had no shame. “There’s may be a couple of things I’d have done differently, but certainly none of those involved women, and there’s no woman alive who could say it did.”

Eric said that he had put his name in for substitute teaching. “You know the other day I was looking through my papers from graduate school. I was into my second year, getting all As and on my way to becoming a secondary school principal, but I left to be general manager at Scarborough Downs. I did a good job. The place was one of the most successful tracks in the country, but I had to leave twice through no fault of my own. I guess I’m bitter. I feel cheated. I think my wife feels cheated too.”

In early February I received word that Gerry Davidson was in Florida getting treatment for cancer, and was trying to get in touch with me. Rather than give him my number in Canada, I called him. He said he’d been thinking about my book and told me “Joe is a very good example of a psychotic person who is not too delusional wrecking havoc in society. The reason Joe can wreck so much havoc is because he is brilliant, capable, and very charming when he wants to be.” During a half hour conversation, he called Ricci “a prototype” and said his brand of insanity is something “the public and the law doesn’t recognize.” He said “They understand some little guy living above a shoe store who thinks the communists are broadcasting in his head, but not a person who has smarts, and is capable. Joe’s delusions are getting stronger and stronger, but he’s not delusional enough, not the kind where he thinks he’s Napoleon or the King of Sweden.”

I listened stunned, realizing Ricci was still acting as the role model for troubled teens, though at the time I still knew little about Elan.

“Let me give you an example,” Davidson said, assuming a professorial tone. “Someone who is psychotic, for all practical purposes, has mental mechanisms or defenses - the way a person relates to the world we call mechanisms. A psychotic person defends himself by using denial. He denies something happens, refuses to see it, which is very characteristic of Joe. He also distorts what other people say and do. And then there’s projection. Joe projects all over the place. In fact he does all of these. Another aspect is a terrible aggression and hatred for everyone around him, including the person he dominates.”

Davidson noted that Ricci was getting “worse and worse,” observing, “It’s compounded by the cocaine. Even though he stopped using it the mental state remains. You just don’t get rid of it that fast.”

He talked about narcissism and said that it precipitated delusions. “The sun has

to rise and fall on Joe,” he said. “If anything goes wrong, it’s always someone else’s fault.” Davidson told me he was going to be staying in Florida a month longer but would like to get together when he got back to Maine. Before hanging up he stressed how valuable a book that captured the essence of a person like Joe Ricci, could be to society, adding, “It’s really important for people to understand the pathology.”

xxx

Dan and I traveled from Montreal to Maine to review records at the state capital in Augusta regarding Elan and Scarborough Downs. I had contacted various state offices and spent about a half hour on the phone from Montreal with Sylvia Lund from the Office of Drug and Alcohol Protection. She told me I could come in anytime and see the public records.

When I arrived, she pulled the files regarding Elan, but after just five minutes office manager Neil Miner bolted into the alcove where I was reviewing documents and demanded I stop. When I explained that I had called in advance for clearance, he called Maine’s Department of Human Services Director of Social Services, Peter Walsh, and Deputy Attorney General Bill Stokes at home for their opinions. After waiting for a half hour, I was told I had to put the request in writing, and lawyers would have to look over all the documents before sending them to me. These materials contained information about Elan’s loss of its human services licensing during 1985 and 1986. There was also Maine’s report issued after the Illinois investigations into Elan.

“We can’t be too careful when it comes to protecting Joe’s Ricci’s rights,” Miner declared, appearing oblivious to the arrangements I had made with a member of his staff, and indifferent to the many miles I traveled to review the records.

I spoke with Gerry Davidson at his Portland condo in late March. He seemed in good spirits, but weak, and said he tired easily. He told me that he had come to Portland earlier in the day to sign the complaint his lawyer, Tom Cox, had prepared against Ricci, charging mismanagement of their enterprises. But he said he is keeping it in his pocket pending the civil suit he and Ricci had filed against their former lawyers, who acted as their counsel, while also representing Depositors Bank.

Meanwhile Davidson suggested I read a book called “*Mask of Sanity*” by Hervey Cleckley, M.D., to gain some insight into Ricci. He said the book was the study of the psychopathic personality. “You’ve got to understand what makes up the psychopathic personality,” he declared.

I remarked I was finding discrepancies about Joe Ricci’s version of his childhood in Port Chester and what it was really like.

“He was a drug addict like I was a drug addict,” Davidson chuckled, adding, “Apparently Joe had broken into a mailbox and stolen Social Security checks. Pleading addiction to heroin was simply a good way for him to stay out of jail.”

## Chapter Thirty-One: Cult of Personality

Ricci and Davidson's \$25 million conflict of interest suit against their former law firm, Burnstein, Shur, Sawyer, and Nelson was slated to be the legal media event of 1989. It had been delayed several times but was finally set to begin on April 4 at the Sagadahoc County courthouse in Bath, Maine, about a half hour from Portland.

I traveled to Maine, arriving in time for opening arguments from attorney, Bob Axelrod, who was hoping to win another fortune for his clients, as he had done for Ricci and Davidson's suit again the bank. I thought I could slip in the back and keep a low profile. But just inside the door I encountered Joe Ricci, pacing in the back of the courtroom. He spotted me and declared aloud to some spirit in the sky: "Now they're all here."

I found a little guest house called *Lady and The Loon*, on nearby Bailey Island, planning to divide my time in Maine between the drama in the Bath courtroom, and personal interviews for this book. I felt uneasy about being followed, so kept my guard up, trying to be as cautious as I could. Dan stayed in Montreal with our son, but insisted I check in often to verify my safety.

Stephen Smith, an inmate at Maine State Prison in Thomaston, had been one of the first people to write me with accounts of his experiences at Elan. We exchanged several letters, and I decided to interview him at the prison when I was in Maine. On the second day of the trial, I left early and set out to meet him. The warden had arranged a private space where we could talk with some degree of privacy, and I could use a voice recorder.

I had never been inside a prison before. I wasn't ready for the stares from the male inmates and tried not to wince at the sound of steel doors banging behind me, as I was escorted through narrow passageways, up and down flights of steep metal stairs.

Stephen Smith had written me with detailed accounts of his isolation at Elan, his rape, ditch digging, attempted runaways, and subsequent punishments. But when I met him face to face, I really felt his pain. He looked still boyish with long blond hair pulled back in a ponytail. His blue eyes welled with outrage, as he

revealed that Joe Ricci was “worse than Satan.”

He approached me with an intensity I didn’t expect. “I don’t understand how he gets away with what he does, how people can legitimize his actions, how he can grow rich from the pain he inflicts,” he said shaking his head, telling me that his stiff sentence at Thomaston was handed down by a judge who chastised him for “not taking advantage of the wonderful opportunity at Elan.”

He replayed his horrors, telling me about his isolation and rape at Elan, and how he was misdiagnosed. ( See Chapter 5: In their words, for more of my interview with Stephen Smith.) Smith said he was attending college at the prison, reading constantly, and learning to express himself verbally. He promised to send me some of his writing.

The following poems arrived in the mail a few days later with a note from him that read. “Writing a poem about Joe Ricci is like pulling barbed wire through my heart. He’s a Mengele, a sick and insane God gone mad.”

### Mengele of Auschwitz

by Stephen Smith

*Mengele of Auschwitz left a disciple in the woods of Maine, Saint Snake, Joe Ricci... The wicked always seek, obscure woods far from decent people, where they can cause innocents to scream and laugh at their futility.*

### Self Made

by Stephen Smith

Joe Ricci, Master, God, King

*Ruler of a world called Elan;*

*His heart runs on Mercedes tires; His throne is millions made on self’s, Yet he’d say:*

*“I’m a self-made millionaire.”*

When I returned from the prison there was a message from Gerry Davidson. He wanted to meet for breakfast before the court session the next day. When I arrived at the Freeport Cafe early the next morning, Davidson’s BMW was already in the parking lot, and he and his wife Rosalie were inside. I hadn’t seen either of them for at least two years before spotting them across the aisle in court the day before. Davidson had been quite sick that winter in Florida, but he

looked healthy and fit that day. Once again, he reiterated how important it was for people to understand the methods of people like Joe, “who can be enormously damaging to those around him.”

Davidson asked if I’d read the book, *Fatal Vision*, about Dr. Jeffrey Macdonald who had been convicted of brutally murdering his wife and young daughters. He compared Macdonald to Ricci, which made me shiver. Sipping coffee I listened to this psychiatrist, who had taught at Harvard, talk about his psychopathic partner, explaining to me how on the surface “these people can be very charming, charismatic, and mimic emotions they are really incapable of feeling.” Rosalie listened to her husband, and nodded in agreement, while carefully wiping all the oil from her bacon with a napkin. When she was finished, she reached over and degreased her husband’s bacon as well. I declined to eat, somewhat stunned by Davidson’s candid characterizations.

I asked Davidson about his quote in a 1975 article in *Corrections* magazine where he compared Elan to a concentration camp, and Joe Ricci to the Gestapo where residents take on the personality of the aggressor. He stopped chewing for a minute, swallowed hard, and then with the palm of his hand chopped at the air in front of my coffee cup.

“Don’t pay any attention to that piece,” he instructed, acting like an impatient professor, talking to one of his students. But I pressed, asking him whether Ricci was always a psychopath, or developed into one. “He’s been getting worse,” he observed. “Now I think he poses a real threat to Elan. That’s why after this trial is over, I’m going to try to get him out of there for everyone’s sake.”

The proceedings in court were slow that day with lots of interruptions, so I left early to get back to my room and arrange for more interviews. That evening I had dinner with John Day, a reporter for *Bangor Daily News*, who had just arrived in town to cover the trial. His editor wanted him to write a profile of Joe Ricci. Day asked to chat with me about my observations. We shared notes at the Great Impasta restaurant in Brunswick.

When I got back to my room Dan was on the phone from Montreal. WMTW, the Maine television channel that broadcast there, reported Ricci’s case was settled that afternoon.

I called Davidson who confirmed that it was true. He said he was “relieved,” revealing he and Ricci settled “for a bit more than \$1 million” when they realized the defense team was very well prepared. Davidson observed, “They learned not to make the same mistakes the bank did,” confiding he had been “very worried about some things that might have come out.”

The next morning the front-page of the *Portland Press Herald* proclaimed: “*Ricci Settles Suit Against Lawyers.*” The accompanying story and TV news accounts differed dramatically from my conversation with Davidson.

Ricci told reporters he decided to settle because he felt sorry for Lenny Nelson, and Greg Tselikis who had been friends. He said he couldn’t bear to see the pain on their faces. Ricci told reporters he was going to spend time with his two teen age sons, try to quit smoking, and taking sleeping pills. (Two years earlier he said he was going to repair his relationship with his sons, but never went to see them.)

When questioned whether he settled because his case was not going well, he told a reporter that the sheriff had conducted a poll of the jury, and it showed that the jurors would have found in his favor. Yet the sheriff at the office at Sagadahoc County Superior Court told me he never did any poll of the jury, informal or otherwise.

On the night of April 14, 1989, while Ricci and his legal hit squad were celebrating the \$1million settlement, I met April Bishop in Portland for a quiet dinner.

It had been many months since we met for lunch and a year since she was fired from Scarborough Downs, and had her car repossessed. She still hadn’t been able to save enough money to get another car. She told me she was moving to Florida the next week to be with her high school sweetheart, whom she hadn’t seen in four years.

He was the first love of her life but she was getting cold feet. “I just hope Joe hasn’t changed my life so much that I can’t love anymore,” she confided. April told me that a month earlier she, Eric and his wife Debbie met with Gerry Davidson’s lawyer, Tom Cox, to draft affidavits for “some kind of legal challenge.”

She said, “I told the attorney my story, and he recorded the whole meeting,” adding, “The tape with a copy of my statement is at my parent’s house along with a letter in case anything happens to me.” She explained, “We talked about Joe’s cocaine use, and I told him I’d seen Joe use it and how it totally changed his personality. He became hyper, paranoid, started distrusting people more than usual.”

Cox didn’t ask April whether she used cocaine with Ricci, but she told me she knew nothing about cocaine, before working as a receptionist at Scarborough Downs. She confided she felt “a lot of pressure” from her millionaire boss, who was double her age. “He never gave me a choice. It wasn’t like ‘Do you want to?’ It was just ‘shut off the phones, come into my apartment, and bring a credit card.’”

After their meeting with Cox, Eric, Debbie, and April had dinner at Dimillo’s restaurant on Portland’s waterfront, and then went to Panda Garden restaurant in the Old Port for drinks. Eric and Debbie drove April home about 11p.m.

A hour and a half later April’s roommate was awakened by a call from Joe Ricci, wanting to speak with April. She said she couldn’t wake her. At 4a.m. Ricci called again, indicating it was “a life-or-death matter.” Her roommate told him April was sleeping soundly. He hissed, “Well I guess it’s death then!”

Her roommate became alarmed, and finally woke her.

When April answered Ricci said he was just calling “to talk,” but April didn’t buy it.

“I said, ‘It’s 4 o’clock in the morning, and we haven’t talked for six months, what do you want?’” Then Ricci became nasty.

“He called me a cunt and said ‘I know what you did. I’m going to get you for that. You play dirty, now I’m going to play dirty.’”

The next day April went to the Portland police station to complain about Ricci’s harassing call. Ten minutes after she returned home Ricci was on the telephone. He said he was glad they had a “heart to heart” conversation the night before and invited her go with him to New York. She declined and didn’t hear from him again. She said leaving the state was the only way she could try to move on.

Back in Montreal I continued to set up interviews to corroborate information about Ricci. I made several calls to Father Bob Allanach with whom I had traveled to *60 Minutes* when Ricci was running for governor. Davidson had told me that Father Bob had fallen out of favor and Ricci stopped paying the Oblate order for the priest's services, canceled his credit card, ceased making payments on his car, and made life generally miserable. He finally left his position at Elan and was working at a small counseling center mid-state.

Ricci's former wife Sherry told me she and Ricci had first met Father Bob and another priest Gerry Bolduc in the late 1970s. I wanted to ask Father Bob about his impressions of Ricci in those early days. I also wanted to ask him about a letter Stephen Smith said he got from a priest at Elan, claiming he had never been a resident there.

I made several calls to his office and left messages on his home answering machine, but he never responded. Finally, I reached his friend, Father Bolduc at a prison in upstate New York where he was working as a chaplain.

Father Bolduc said he had to be very guarded talking with me. He told me he wasn't being paranoid, but realistic because he knew "what Joe does in terms of going after people." He said he would like to talk to me, but not on the phone. I suggested I set up a meeting in New York with him and Father Bob.

But 24 hours later, Father Bolduc called to tell me they couldn't meet because Bob had been forbidden by the bishop in Maine to talk to me. He said Bob had told him he had received a call from the chancery and been instructed not to cooperate with my book.

I called the chancery to confirm whether the bishop had called Father Robert Allanach and instructed him not to talk to me in reference to my book about Joe Ricci. A few days later Sister Rita Mae called to let me know the bishop never made such a request. She told me she had contacted Father Bob herself. "He doesn't wish to speak with you," she said. We both agreed that his silence was "certainly his prerogative," but had nothing to do with any request from the head of the Catholic diocese.

Father Bolduc eventually told me. "Bob's tired. He's had a lot of stress working for Joe. Sometimes it was hard to know the demands from one week to the next.

He's sick of people screaming all around him and needs some peace.”

xxx

On May 15, 1989, Gerry Davidson finally filed his complaint against his partner in Cumberland County Superior Court, charging that Ricci had wasted more than \$500,000 of their company’s money. He claimed Joe Ricci “regularly engaged in the use of cocaine while performing or attempting to perform his function as chief managing officer for Scarborough Downs Racetrack, and Elan.” The suit also charged that Ricci had attempted to cause “a racing judge at Scarborough Downs to alter the actual order of finish in a horse race, and then fired the official, an action that resulted in a lawsuit and caused the corporation to pay a substantial settlement to avoid an adverse judgement.” It also alleged that Ricci failed to adequately report the use of company assets and employees used in conjunction with his campaign for governor.

The eleven-page suit asked the court to liquidate the assets of Golden Ark, and order Ricci removed from any management function of the corporation prior to commencement of the 1989 racing season. It also requested a receiver to take charge of Golden Ark or require Ricci to purchase his shares of stock in the company, allow Davidson to purchase his shares, or order sale of all property.

Ricci called the suit “a slam job,” and said Davidson just wanted to be bought out of the company. Ricci admitted, as he had during the Key Bank trial, that he used cocaine in the early 1980’s, but claimed he “stopped using it several years ago.” He told the press, “After vindicating myself (via the Key Bank trial) here I am back in the news as a coke using crook. I find that criminal.”

During the last week in May Davidson and I talked for about twenty minutes on the phone. He told me he hoped he’d be able to get a receiver “within a week because everything is falling apart.”

He said that the company airplane was being repossessed by the bank, that Ricci had borrowed \$300,000 to open the track that season, but could not make it with that little, and was probably facing bankruptcy. He confided that Ricci had invested his money from the Key Bank settlement in gold and silver futures, and that most of his money was probably gone. He said he was “terribly worried about Elan and that.”

Then he changed the subject, explaining he had recently spoken with his friend, Jerry Harcovie, whom he identified as “the guy who runs the AP office in Portland.” He told me Harcovie was wondering why I was pursuing a story about Joe Ricci.

“We had quite a discussion. I told him it was an extremely important book I told him your book is as important as Shana Alexander’s, “*Nutcracker*,” the story of that woman who persuaded her sons to kill their wealthy grandfather.”

## **Chapter Thirty-Two: Davidson will pay for it.**

After the school year ended in Montreal my husband and I decided to move back to Maine for our son's sake. Going to school in French speaking Quebec wasn't easy for him, and the strain of commuting from Montreal to Maine for interviews took its toll physically and financially.

During the Fourth of July weekend Davidson called to let me know he and his lawyer Tom Cox were still preparing their case against Ricci. He told me he had contacted Martha Amesbury, the former controller whom Ricci had fired, and they were comparing notes.

He wanted to know about my book and pressed to learn its contents. I explained that I could not share my sources and research information to help him in his legal challenges because it would be unethical. He didn't seem to mind.

"Something must be done to make your book of interest to people who don't even know of Joe Ricci," he said. "This type of a person should be identified, and people should be aware of how this type of person can destroy lives." He talked about the mask of sanity that people like Ricci wear. "I hope you clarify for people what these characters are like. People must become enlightened about the dangers of dealing with someone like Joe."

During the summer of 1989, I had numerous conversations with people who wanted to talk mostly off the record about their dealings with Joe Ricci. I juggled my research into Ricci's past, while trying to keep abreast of what was happening around me. Most of what I heard didn't make me laugh, but the "groundhog conspiracy" was an exception.

In July Eric told me about a call he received from a national racetrack consultant, Dan Coons, with whom he had become friendly when he was general manager of Scarborough Downs. Coons called Eric from the Portland Jetport on his way back to Chicago. He said Ricci had summoned him to Maine one night in a panic. When he got there, he was rushed into the track's conference room to consult with two mammologists who had just been flown in from New York. The group was taken to the infield, to determine whether the groundhog holes in the track's surface might in fact have really been dug by humans who wanted to undermine the operation of the racetrack. Eric said Coons was in tears on the

phone from laughing so hard. He explained that groundhogs were everywhere at the track, like cats. Yet incredibly Ricci had badgered the scientists so much, they finally told him what he wanted to hear, that maybe some of the holes weren't really made by groundhogs.

One day in late July I received a letter from an inmate at Maine State Prison. It was from a person Stephen Smith had told me had been known as "the enforcer" at Elan. The letter written in childish penmanship read

*My name is Norberto R. Brice. Come up here and visit me, and we will talk. They call me Raymond. Bye.*

In August I made my second trip to Maine State Prison so I could meet Norberto. He told me he was half white and half black and was nicknamed 'milk bone' at Elan. He seemed tougher, much rougher around the edges than Stephen Smith. And unlike Stephen, he harbored no feelings of hatred for Joe Ricci whom he said was "like a father to me."

"Joe liked me a lot and I wanted to be like Joe. I looked up to him because he grew up on the streets in the Bronx, was into heroin and stuff, and completely turned his life around." Norberto was sent to Elan by his social worker in Rhode Island when he was about 13 years old, and moved quickly up the hierarchy, becoming a chief expeditor, the head of Elan's internal police force, who successfully pursued and brought back those who tried to run away.

"I was fast," he recalled with a chuckle. "There was nobody I couldn't get. I had a lot of status."

Noberto, then 30 years old, had been out of Elan for 15 years. He had been at the prison in Thomaston for just two months and told me he was "set-up by the attorney general's office because they wanted me off the streets real bad." He said he was dealing cocaine. "Drugs aren't my thing I was just selling the stuff. They think they beat me, but I beat them. I just got a year here."

After asking me to turn off my recording device Noberto talked about his past, all the money he'd made, and what he wanted for a future when he got out of prison. Later, with the recorder whirring, he explained that in the years since leaving the strange place in the woods of Poland Spring, he had all kinds of

different jobs, including selling drugs, pimping females, and had fathered seven children. He admitted that he had some bad times at Elan but called it “a learning experience.” He mentioned a guy named Peter, Ricci’s right-hand man, who beat him up, and humiliated him. He said Peter and another guy punched him unmercifully, after a girl he was friendly with ran away.

“We were tight, but I didn’t know she was splitting,” he said. The girl eventually returned and insisted she hadn’t told Norberto she was leaving. “They knew then they were wrong for torturing me. But no apology, no nothing. They said, ‘That’s just the way injustice is in life.’”

Norberto graduated from Elan when he was sixteen years old and said he was doing all right back in Connecticut when his social worker suggested he return. Elan’s private plane came and picked him up.

“When I got back Joe Ricci shook my hand, and told me he was putting me in reentry status, making me a big shot in Elan 3,” he explained. But his nemesis Peter was in charge of that house, and immediately shot him down, putting him in the ring every day. “Peter said I still had a tough guy image, so he made me scrub floors with a toothbrush, and he and another guy used to jump me in the living room and beat me up.”

He said, “I wanted to tell Joe about it. But Joe wasn’t around. There’s no way in the world Joe coulda known about it, because Joe ain’t gonna give nobody a status, and then have him go get that just taken away for no reason. He just wouldn’t do it. Joe liked me.” He tried to get word to Joe that he was “being fucked with,” but figures he didn’t get the message. “I know it wasn’t Joe, but the people he had working for him, that fouled that program up.”

Talking a breath, he looked upset talking about his experiences even after all the years that had elapsed. “I can’t say Joe Ricci never did nothing bad. But he did a lot of good. He did a tremendous good by starting the program. A lot of people died. But let me tell you why I think a lot of people died. It was because they didn’t know how to apply what they learned when they hit the streets.”

He rattled off names of former graduates. Half were in prison, or on the street, others dead. He told me the whereabouts of one Elan graduate, Don H., who is a pimp, but warned me to be careful if I went to see him “because you’re a good-

looking woman, and he'll take what he wants.”

Becoming introspective he admitted that there “are not too many success stories from Elan.” He said “I probably could have been more successful if I stayed on as a staff member there. But you know the people that stay on can never leave, because if they leave, they’d be lost. They just can’t make it on their own.”

He added “Elan turns a negative into a positive. When I think about selling drugs to make money, that’s not negative stuff. A sin is only something you feel guilty about.” He fell silent for almost a full minute and then continued.

“I think there was one thing that Joe Ricci never really saw; a lot of people looked up to him, a lot of people wanted to be close to Joe, and I don’t think Joe knew that he broke a lot of hearts. You write that in your book. You just say it like I said it. I don’t think Joe knew that he was breaking all those hearts.”

After a long pause he said “Joe is successful, and nobody can take that from him. People can call him a mobster, or they can call him a druggie, but they can’t hurt him. You know why? He’s got the bank account, and he can beat anyone. Joe is the smartest man I know.

xxx

The dispute between Ricci and Davidson waged on during the summer of 1989, with Davidson’s lawyer reviewing the track’s financial records, and assembling affidavits. Davidson even hired a private investigator to conduct interviews with former employees.

Joe Ricci hired the law firm of Friedman and Babcock to represent him, but the relationship lasted only three days before he moved on to a different law firm. Then in mid-August Davidson abruptly dropped the suit he filed against Ricci in May but hinted he might file other charges.

By the summer of 1989 I had interviewed a wide range of people who knew Joe Ricci, and decided it was time for me to talk to Ricci again. Letters to lawyers proved fruitless, so I decided to make a trip to Scarborough Downs.

On September 22, the second last night of the 1989 racing season, I went to the track, accompanied by Dan and former general manager Eric Moynihan. I

wanted to go quietly in a non-confrontive manner and see if Ricci would speak with me. I knew he could become agitated and have us escorted off the premises.

I decided that talking with Joe Ricci might provide more insight, nearly two and a half years after walking away in Waterville. Previously, I had only my own experience as a frame of reference. But I had begun to piece together the many elements in the bizarre puzzle.

The three of us took a seat at a table in the upper clubhouse. A few minutes later Ricci arrived at the bar and began shaking hands with some patrons. Then he headed our way, leaned over the railing that separated our table from the bar, and greeted us with a nod of the head, declaring, “The story never ends.”

Looking at me he said, “I like the title of your book. (It was mentioned in a small piece in *Maine Times* that spring.) It took me a couple of weeks to figure out what it meant, but it’s very creative. You write the book, and Davidson will pay for it.”

“Not a penny,” I answered, thinking he thought Davidson was a funding source. “I’m not talking dollars and cents,” he said, and walked away.

Five minutes later Ricci appeared on the other side of the railing, directly in front of our table. Pulling up a chair, he asked if we’d mind if he sat down. During the next hour and a half, he left the table, and returned three times, expressing a full range of emotions.

He wanted to know about the trip to Port Chester. “Nobody would talk to you,” he declared triumphantly. I related some of what I’d learned from interviews. At times he became conversational asking me questions like whether I knew he worked at Neilsen’s Luncheonette one summer. When I relayed Victor Donato’s comments at Don Bosco and asked whether he had indeed dated his social science teacher, he smiled.

But he frowned when I mentioned Arnold Bakery, and the union president who maintained he did not start the union there. “That’s not true,” he declared.

Eric, who later told me he had trouble containing his anger in Ricci’s presence, asked him about his suit he had filed against Bob Dow, the former general

manager at Lewiston Raceway because he had made negative comments about him. Eric asked how he expected to get \$20 million from a working-class man. “I don’t,” Joe answered calmly.

“The suit is not about money. I want to just get the weasel on the stand and tell all he knows.”

I decided to ask about Dr. Pet who gave Ricci his first job at DARTEC twenty years earlier, even though he hadn’t even graduated from his rehabilitation program. Ricci countered “I never said I graduated to anyone.” (Elan promotional materials refer to Joe Ricci as a graduate of Daytop, and Joe told reporters he “graduated with flying colors.”)

I mentioned that Dr. Pet had observed that he had a way of “being extremely convincing, making others see his way and do his bidding.” Ricci’s eyes, narrowed. “I’ve always pulled my own wagon.”

When Eric went to the restroom, just Ricci, Dan and I were left at the table. He turned to Dan and said, “We never got along. I don’t know why. But I want to say when I ran for governor, no matter what happened before or after, that was a highlight of my life.”

Remembering his first cousin’s request (If you ever get through to Joe tell him Andrea said ‘Hi, Tell him I’m still alive’) I relayed her message and expressed her fond memories of playing music with him in the attic. Rather than appreciating this recollection, he emphatically denied it. “It’s impossible,” he pronounced. “Andrea is much younger than I am. She was only about two when I was a teenager.” (Andrea was eight years younger. She was eleven years old when he was still at Port Chester High.) Then with a sneer he referred to his cousin as a ‘junky’ who didn’t know what she was saying.

Ricci left and returned to our table, accompanied by a woman he introduced as Katherine Ralston, an employee of Scarborough Downs. He identified her as a former journalism major at Marquette University and said that they were writing a book called: “*A Matter of Convenience*,” that would depict the terrible injustices in the world.

When I asked her how she met Ricci he interrupted, instructing her not to

answer.

## Chapter Thirty-Three: Psychopath

It wasn't until February of 1990 that I got time to pore over the books Gerry Davidson promised would provide the insight into his partner's personality. "Culture of Narcissism" by Christopher Lasch, "Mast of Sanity" by Hervey Cleckley M.D., and a medical text called "The Criminal Personality," all delved into the study of the psychopathic personality disorder.

The back cover of "Mast of Sanity," published in 1982, by the Mosby Medical Library, read: "*Arrogant, shameless, immoral, impulsive, antisocial, superficial, alert, self-assured, boastful, callous, remorseless, charming, irresponsible; This is the poisonous mix of traits that make up the psychopathic personality. This book stands as the definitive presentation of all we know and can do about this disruptive, destructive, alarmingly widespread personality type. For everyone who must deal with such human beings in hospitals or courts of law, and for all whose lives are grievously affected by them, "The Mask of Sanity" is essential to understanding their mystery, their power, their menace.*"

Dr. Cleckley wrote inside in his author's note:

*"No brief case summary or orthodox psychiatric history can succeed in portraying the character and behavior of these people as they appear day after day, year after year. The impersonal and necessarily abstracted picture of these psychopaths in a purely clinical setting fails to show them as they appear in the flesh and blood, and in the process of living. To know them adequately one must try to see them, not merely with the physician's calm and relatively detached eye, but also with the eye of an ordinary man on the streets, whom they confound and amaze."*

I began to understand why Davidson was so enthusiastic about a portrait chronicling Joe Ricci's dealings with people since he was a youth in Port Chester. Davidson was also a fan of psychodramas. He loaned me a copy of his medical text "The Criminal Personality" that listed what researchers consider the ten most prominent features in the diagnosis of a psychopath. It describes psychopaths as "sensation seekers" who do not respect the laws, manners, or mores of society. It says their irresponsibility becomes apparent everywhere the better one knows them, and that "even actions that appear responsible are often

*means to self-serving ends.”*

In describing traits of the psychopath, this medical text cites a person who “Requires immediate gratification, has a high degree of egocentricity, a lack of empathy and downright callousness toward others. They are masters at rationalizing, which often takes the form of casting blame.”

It explains that people with this personality disorder are” *above average in intelligence, have rapidly changing moods, and “emerge from pessimism to buoyancy by setting out on yet another adventure.”*

Lying is a predominant trait, according to the textbook, which states a psychopath’s lying “*is so pervasive that some observers have characterized him as being unable to tell the truth.*”

The text notes that people from other groups who are not necessarily psychopaths exhibit some of their traits. These two groups were identified as “assassins” and “alienated youth.”

Reading this information provided by the psychiatrist about his partner, the man who was the executive director at a school for troubled adolescents astounded me, especially since Elan’s promotional materials stated:

*“The most important thing residents can take away from Elan is the improvement of interpersonal relationship skills. The Elan resident is ready for graduation from the program when it has been demonstrated that he or she can consistently be productive, honest, and non-exploitive. We expect Elan graduates to behave with self-control, even when frustrated, and to use their new knowledge to solve the problems of living.”*

Many former Elan residents from Illinois mentioned Dr. Marvin Schwartz as the doctor responsible for their referral. Schwartz eventually became president of AAP Mental Health Resources in the Chicago area. He was both a psychiatrist and an attorney, who appeared on the Phil Donahue Show.

I decided to contact Schwartz to see if he knew Ricci was a seriously troubled person, acting as a role model for impressionable teenagers.

This doctor-lawyer told me he didn’t feel comfortable having some statements

on the record. When we spoke he repeatedly searched for what he termed “safe quotes,” remarking it was difficult to talk as both a physician and lawyer, occupations that can be at odds.

Schwartz explained that he and Gerry Davidson went to medical school together, and that he initially lent the money to keep Elan going. He confirmed his practice group was a major referral source, and his relationship with the Illinois school districts helped Elan secure additional referrals from that state. But he denied he benefited financially from the referrals he made to Elan. “Accepting any form of payment would have been unethical,” he declared. But he conceded he received some “small consulting fees, but nothing proportionate to the large amount of referrals.” He said, “Basically, Gerry was a friend.”

But for Schwartz becoming “disenchanted” with Elan was “sort of an understatement.” After the charges of abuse by the Illinois Division of Child and Family services, Schwartz told me he “certainly had concerns as to the need for responsible behavior. Let’s leave it at that.”

Describing the program to which he referred so many teenagers observed “When it started it presented reasonably high-quality care...It was an interesting example of a horizontal peer treatment model. But it never developed adequately, from my standpoint, the type of professional staffing I would have preferred. If all staff are former patients, this develops problems with professional training.” Despite Elan’s astounding financial successes, Schwartz stated there was “nothing creative and certainly nothing new about Elan.”

I asked him why he thought the unlikely partnership between Gerry Davidson and Joe Ricci endured for years. He said, “I never understood that.”

Speaking about Joe Ricci being a role model for adolescent boys and girls, Schwartz carefully choose his words. He said “The tragedy is that Joe is a very bright guy. I had hoped that the two of them, Joe, and Gerry, would develop something that could continue to be quality. I’m not sure what happened.”

When I mention the book *“Mask of Sanity*, Schwartz appeared relieved and said, “Ok, then you understand.” We talk more about role models. I asked whether he thought Joe Ricci was a positive role model for adolescents in the early days when he was helping build Elan. He said “Joe was a good role model to the

degree that he was an individual who had been in difficulty and rehabilitated himself. He conveyed the potential for rehabilitation.”

But when I pointed out that Joe Ricci never graduated from his own rehabilitation program, he responded. “Well, that’s the interesting issue. You’re raising the question with me as to ‘what degree was he rehabilitated?’ to which I could not comment could I?”

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I received a flurry of phone calls from Gerry Davidson during the first two months of 1990. Some of our phone conversations were lengthy, as he detailed the status of his battles with Ricci and offered insight into his behavior.

During the first week of January, Ricci sent Davidson a letter on Scarborough Downs’ stationary firing him as Elan’s medical director, a position he held since Elan’s founding nearly two decades earlier. The letter directed Davidson *“not to set foot on corporate property without first making an appointment.* Ricci apparently had the authority to do this, based upon his controlling share of Golden Ark Enterprises.

On January 16, 1990, Davidson filed another suit against Ricci, claiming he was redirecting some of Elan’s assets to other corporate entities while burdening it with expenses, which should be charged to the racetrack, and Ricci personally. The suit asked that Ricci make restitution for all the money improperly billed.

On January 24, 1990 Davidson sent a letter on Elan letterhead to all parties doing business with Elan explaining that he and Joe Ricco have a disagreement. He wrote in art.: *Until a few weeks ago we seemed to be reaching an agreement whereby I would become sole owner on December 1 and, indeed, I had been arranging financing, staffing, and affiliations with other institutions for the school. Unfortunately, negotiations appear to have totally broken down, and Mr. Ricci has announced that he has fired me as Medical Director. Thus, I have been left with no choice but to seek a judicial resolution.*

*“The point of this letter is to inform you that my attorneys and I are trying to resolve this problem as soon as possible...One of the factors, which has led to my disagreements with Mr. Ricci, is my feeling that Elans’ "concept" is becoming*

*progressively diluted under his management... Whatever happens, I want to let you know that my first concern is for the integrity, and continuation of the Elan philosophy and technology. I do not want twenty years of uniquely creative work, work that never was accomplished anywhere else by anyone else, to be lost..."*

Joe Ricci sent out a letter to counter Davidson's correspondence, which read in part:

*"I apologize for the fact that Dr Davidson has inappropriately chosen to involve you in Elan's financial matters. Dr. Davidson and I occasionally have, and are currently having disagreement, but these do not and will not be allowed to affect the quality of care. Dr. Davidson will continue the Board of Directors, but will no longer act as Medical Director, in large part due to his failing health. An announcement will be made soon regarding the new Medical Director for the Elan School. I personally assure you that I intend to maintain the integrity and philosophy of Elan as I have done for the past twenty years. Again, Dr. Davidson's choice of involving you in this matter is unfair to you, and I sincerely apologize for any anxiety this may have caused..."*

Davidson called me to explain his frustration. He referred to Ricci as "a bonafide psychopath," and said he was "crazy as a coot."

Davidson was also incensed about something John Campbell had filed in court that indicated he had been conspiring with Lewiston Raceway owner, Charlie Day to get Ricci committed.

He said "I called Poulos and told him I want this nonsense stopped. I don't mind Campbell pimping for Joe, but I certainly want him to stop doing things which cause me trouble. Campbell knows Joe is crazy. He's said it many times. He laughs at him. When he used to talk to me, he'd laugh about the plot of stealing the Downs for the ethanol plant etc., but when Joe wants him to do something, he panders to Joe's insanity. I think that is reprehensible in a professional man." Davidson said he was considering complaining to the American Bar Association.

"I think Campbell gets caught up in Joe's reality," he said, observing that "Joe has a mesmerizing *folie à deux*." He explained that this psychiatric disorder is an interaction between two people: "One of them is crazy and very domineering,

and then you get someone else who is relatively passive but sane and believes the fantasies of the domineering crazy person. When you get a whole band of people who get caught up in a domineering crazy person's reality then you get the Nazi party, or Jim Jones and things like that."

Davidson observed that my book should focus on "the perversion of professional standards by lawyers dealing with people like Joe."

Listening to him I couldn't help but wonder if he didn't realize that he may have been guilty of the "perversion of professional standards." How could he have allowed the man he called "a bonafide psychopath" to continue as a role model for impressionable teenagers for nearly two decades?

Gerry Davidson's phone call woke me before 7a.m. on February 27. He wanted to get together that evening to "chat" and get back his copy of "*The Criminal Personality.*"

When I arrived at his Portland condominium, he was alone and seemed tense, anxious to learn what my research had revealed about his partner. I wanted to determine if he could really wrestle Elan from Ricci as he told me repeatedly, he was trying to do "for the good of everyone."

We had dinner at an Indian restaurant around the corner from his brownstone. He told me he and Ricci had met that afternoon to try "one last ditch effort at settling the dispute," but that it had not gone well.

I asked about Ricci's use of drugs particularly prescription ones, and if he prescribed them. "Some," he answered vaguely, volunteering nothing.

We talked more about psychopathic behavior. I finally asked him "Didn't you as a well-trained psychiatrist know better? How can you justify staying with Joe Ricci for so long and letting him with all his defects act as a role model at Elan?" He stared through me, without expression, and changed the subject, talking about his favorite Indian food, and the artwork of Jackson Pollack, comparing it to the music of John Cage.

Finally, toward dinner's end I realized why Davidson wanted to have dinner, when he asked if I'd mind meeting with his attorney Tom Cox within the next

couple of days, before the scheduled court hearing set for March 6 concerning his dispute with Ricci. “It would just be to talk to him,” he declared. But I explained again that I had to remain an observer, a witness to the events I report. I could not influence his legal claim against Joe.

He blinked but seemed to take my comments in stride. When he drove me back to my car, he repeated what he had said during the past year about this book. “It’s an important project, which I hope will illustrate the dangers of a person like Joe, so people can be forewarned.”

I hadn’t heard from Davidson after the hearing on March 6, so I decided to call Tom Cox to determine how it had gone. Cox explained there hadn’t been a hearing, that Ricci finally agreed to a settlement. He told me it was some of the toughest negotiations he had ever gone through as an attorney and was pleased it was finally over. Then he remarked he wasn’t certain what Davidson was going to do, since he no longer had any ties to Maine. It was then I grasped the surprising turn of events. Ricci had come up without enough money to buy rather than be bought out by Davidson. He had managed to become the sole owner of both Elan and Scarborough Downs.

I started to dial Davidson but stopped. How could Davidson knowingly have left Ricci, whom he called “a bona fide psychopath” at the helm of Elan? Did he care nothing about the damage he was causing to young lives? After all our conversations, it appeared to me that it had always been about money. Davidson and I never talked again.

I received a certified letter from him in the mail the next day.

*March 8, 1990*

*Dear Ms. Curley,*

*I hereby request that you not publish any book concerning Mr. Joseph Ricci. I further hereby state that I have not told you that Mr. Ricci is a psychopath, and I demand that you not publish any such statement as attributable to me and that you immediately retract any such statement previously made by you.*

*Thank you for your anticipated cooperation in this regard.*

*Very truly yours,*

*Gerald E. Davidson M.D.*

*cc: Edward S. MacColl Esq. .*

The notation at the bottom of the page that a carbon copy of the letter had been sent to Edward S. MacColl Esq, Ricci's attorney, was revealing. Apparently, Davidson's letter to me was part of the deal in which, for the agreed upon price, he handed over full control to Joe.

## **Chapter Thirty-four: What the media missed**

Over the years, Joe Ricci has proven himself to be a far better plaintiff than defendant.

Former controller Martha Amesbury's suit, like that of former Scarborough Downs judge Dick Herman, was settled on the day it was scheduled for trial. In a pre-settlement conversation with me, Martha revealed she was devastated by the lies Ricci talked about her in his countersuit. She said, "Joe would just be cutting his own throat to get me on the stand and say all the dirt that I'm going to say about him." The 'dirt' allegedly included information that might be of interest to the Internal Revenue Service.

During writing this book many people have reported Joe Ricci's pattern of drug abuse. Some have said they made similar charges to public officials overseeing drug investigations in this state. Yet conversations with U.S. Attorney Richard Cohen and former District Attorney Paul Aranson indicated they had no knowledge of any complaints.

Despite Ricci's allegations that state officials had been out to get him with a wide-ranging conspiracy, research for this book revealed quite the contrary. The extensive investigations into Elan in 1983 were the results of individual complaints, and were warranted, yet the attorney general's office found no evidence of wrongdoing.

Gerry Davidson contended that Ricci was responsible for the "perversion of professional standards" by the varied lawyers he hired to do his bidding. But Ricci has demonstrated the ability to have others pervert their professions as well.

What about medical school classmates psychiatrists Gerry Davidson and Marvin Schwartz who provided credibility to a 'therapeutic community' for which Joe Ricci was the role model?

What about the judges and parole officers who gave kids their last chance at Elan or risk going to jail, a fate inmate Stephen Smith said is far preferable to Joe's Ricci's bunker in the Maine woods?

What about social workers who sent children to Elan whose only crimes were being orphans, and thereby wards of the state?

Finally, what about the normally vigilant press who simply printed sweeping statements from Joe Ricci as if they were fact?

*The New York Times* was wrong when it stated in 1987 that Ricci's philanthropic center for constitutional law was operational. All it ever had was an empty office with a phone that rang and rang.

And what about *60 Minutes*, reputed to be the premier investigative news show in the world?

It told an accurate enough story of Joe Ricci's lawsuit against the bank. But weren't there serious errors of omission? And what about the reference to Elan as "one of the most prestigious adolescent programs in the country?" What was the basis for this assertion? Just saying it didn't make it truer than Elan's inflated claims of its success rate.

Advertising, marketing, and public relations is a profession dedicated to putting things in their best most possible light. In that sense, during my stint working for Joe Ricci, I did what I was paid to do. But the truth wasn't served by making sure Joe Ricci told his story of victimization on *60 Minutes*. Like the Elan staffers, who admitted to abusing residents, saying they didn't realize what they were doing at the time, I also plead ignorance.

Just as this book was scheduled for publication in 1991 Judge James Watson, who presided over Ricci's multimillion dollar lawsuit against Key Bank, sent me a copy of a screenplay titled: "*A Man Called Joe*," which had been sent to him for his comments. This astounding script depicted Joe Ricci as a quintessential crusader for justice, not the tyrant many knew and certainly not the bona fide psychopath his psychiatrist partner claimed.

Judge Watson and Bob Axelrod, Joe's attorney for the Key Bank trial, spent days with the scriptwriter at Ricci's request. They both indicated that a producer at *60 Minutes* was involved in the flattering, screenplay. Remembering Allan Maraynes comments about getting the film rights to Joe Ricci story, I attempted to contact him at ABC's 20/20 program, where he then worked as a producer. He

did not respond to any of my calls.

More than two hundred people including Ricci relatives, his ex-wife, employees, lawyers, and judges had willingly talked to me for this book, yet Allan Maraynes, an investigative journalist, refused to confirm or deny his involvement with a screenplay about Joe Ricci.

Numerous calls to his office asking about his involvement in a film project resulted in a terse certified letter from Maraynes that stated he was not interested in being interviewed:

*"I shall take very seriously any portrayal of me, either as a reporter while at CBS, or as a private individual in the years after I left CBS. I will take very seriously any impression left by the book that the relationship I had with Mr. Ricci or any of his associates... was anything other than ethical or legitimate while as an employee or CBS or again in the years after I left."*

Ironically, Maraynes told me in 1986 that people who refuse to appear on the *60 Minutes* camera or submit to an interview, "look guilty of something, even if they are not."

In researching and writing this book there have been surprises around many corners. Receiving a copy of a fictitious script about Joe Ricci from a federal judge indicating it was written in collaboration with a former producer at CBS's *60 Minutes* was just another stunning revelation.

What surprised me more than anything else was that Joe Ricci was still functioning as a role model for troubled adolescents.

Perhaps Maine state prison inmate, Noberto Brice, was right when he said: "You can do what you want, but Joe Ricci has money in the bank. He'll beat anybody. Joe Ricci is the smartest man I ever met."

The observation of Bob Axelrod, the trial attorney who successfully secured Ricci's \$15 Million settlement from a jury was more ominous. In 1990 he told me: "In five, ten, twenty or more years down the road, if Joe is still alive, he'll be doing exactly what he's doing today."

## Epilogue

When this book was first published everyone expected the litigious Joe Ricci to sue me. Instead, he went after his former business partner, Dr. Gerald Davidson. It didn't matter that Davidson died from bone marrow disease six weeks before the book was released. Ricci filed a claim for \$12 million against Davidson's estate, charging him with defamation. The day the suit was filed he issued a press release indicating it would be the first for "all those involved in the book." His claim against Davidson's estate was settled out of court. No related suits were ever filed.

When the first edition of this book was published in the spring of 1991, I was working as director of marketing for Goodwill Industries of Maine and writing two weekly newspaper columns in Portland Maine.

Kevin Baack, Goodwill's executive director, told me he was worried that potential donors would not give to Goodwill because I wrote a controversial book. He offered me a substantial severance if I would resign my senior staff position. After our conversation I received an affidavit containing a stipulation that I would never write or divulge anything about Goodwill or its employees. When I refused to sign the affidavit, I was fired, without any severance.

I didn't realize at the time that Baack, who has a Ph.D in rehabilitation research, was a former high ranking official in Maine's state's mental health bureaucracy. He worked for the state of Maine in the early 1970s and directed Maine's Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation in 1975. After he fired me, Baack admitted to a reporter that he had toured Elan.

Is it possible Baack was among Maine's evaluation team, which exonerated Elan in August of 1975, a month after investigators from the state of Illinois condemned it for flagrant child abuse? According to state records Maine's six-member evaluation was comprised of four lawyers, a psychiatrist, and a Ph.D.

Since publication of this book, I've heard from many people across the United States, who thanked me for telling my story and theirs. Some offered new testimony about their personal experiences with Joe Ricci. I'm sorry I cannot share all they shared with me. It would take volumes.

Yet I received no communique from any governing body in the state of Maine, wanting to investigate the book's disturbing claims about abuse at Elan or its founder's behavior.

In the decade after publication Joe Ricci continued to challenge everything that did not benefit his interests. He never launched the non-profit center for constitutional rights or a magazine to help people unable to advocate for themselves, as he had promised, and was reported in *The New York Times*, after he won his \$15 Million settlement from Key Bank.

Instead, he began to make headlines for more bizarre behavior.

On April 20, 1994, while the horses for the fourth race were warming up at Scarborough Downs, Ricci commandeered the public address system to rant against the state's race steward, J. Michael Lynch. More than 500 racing fans in the track's grandstand and clubhouse heard his insults and obscenities. Ricci repeatedly referred to Lynch as "a f---ing bisexual" and called his boss, Philip Tarr, chairman of the Maine Harness Racing Commission, "Czar Tarr."

The following week my husband, Dan, called upon the racing commission to revoke Ricci's license, based upon the commission's rules, which stipulated that a racing license must be given only to a person of "good moral character." He told the commission they needed to do much more than just penalize Ricci with a fine or suspension. (*The Falmouth Forecaster* published a front-page story about my husband's call to action, and his relation to me and this book.)

Yet the Maine Harness Racing Commission fined him just \$1,000 and suspended the track's license for one week. But it agreed not to enforce the one-week closing if Ricci agreed to stay away from Scarborough Downs for 60 days, undergo professional evaluation for chemical abuse, and attend a substance abuse treatment program.

It is ironic that the founder and director of a treatment center for troubled adolescents, many allegedly drug addicted, was ordered to have "professional evaluation" for chemical abuse and attend a substance treatment program. Yet it appears that no agency in Maine governing the operation of Elan was the least bit troubled by Joe Ricci's excessive use of public profanity, drugs, and alcohol, even though he was the founder and the acknowledged role model for troubled

adolescents at Elan.

Less than two months later Joe Ricci and Scarborough Downs made news again because of a betting anomaly, unprecedented in American harness racing history.

On June 12 an unidentified bettor at Scarborough Downs wagered more than a \$1 million on simulcasts of races occurring at tracks in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Illinois, New York, New Jersey, Florida, and Pennsylvania. The wagers were not made in cash, and the bettor lost approximately \$536,000, according to a report in *The Boston Globe*.

The Maine Harness Racing Commission, delayed investigation of this incident for six weeks. Wagering without cash was not illegal on June 12, but the commission made it illegal after the betting spree that resulted in more than half a million dollars owed to other racetracks.

Ricci indicated he was at the track on June 12, despite being ordered by the commission to stay away, but he would not confirm or deny who made the bets. He merely declared: "There's clearly going to be people who will speculate that I made the bets, but that's only speculation."

Joe Ricci was charged with assault on a woman in Gray Maine on September 7, 1994. A month later he allegedly bit the arm of a woman working at Pizza Time in Scarborough Maine and was charged again with assault. Ricci's lawyer Edward MacColl characterized both charges as efforts to exploit his client because "Mr. Ricci is an attractive target."

Again, it appears that no agency in Maine governing the operation of Elan was troubled by Joe Ricci's arrests for assault on two women, even though he was he well acknowledged role model for troubled adolescents at Elan, many of them young adolescent females.

In November of 1995 a former money counter at Scarborough Downs filed a claim of discrimination and sexual harassment against Ricci, alleging he screamed obscenities and threatened to blow her head off.

Stacy Hagerman, a married woman in her 30s, said Ricci hurled sexual vulgarities at her, in the early hours of the morning of March 25, when she and

others were counting money after the races at Scarborough Downs. According to her suit Ricci threatened he would have one of his security guards use a gun and “blow her brains all over the money.” Ricci dismissed Hagerman’s suit as “blatantly untrue,” stating he was the victim of a frivolous lawsuit. He maintained he hired women and treated them appropriately during his twenty-five years as a business owner.

MacColl told reporters that Hagerman’s claim was a misuse of discrimination laws, adding, “The law is not a code of conduct for being nice. You can’t sue every time your boss raises his voice.” Ricci said he would “duke it out” in court. The defiant defendant, showed up for his trial in July, 1996 with Elan’s executive director Sharon Terry. Accustomed to being a victorious plaintiff, he did not do well, especially in the hands of Peter Bennett, a brilliant employment lawyer. In his closing arguments Bennett’s referred to Ricci as: “A black mark on this temple of justice.”

Jurors concluded that Ricci sexually harassed Hagerman’s during his drunken rant and awarded her \$102,000. The jury was about to consider punitive damages when Ricci decided to settle for an undisclosed sum. Had he not settled he would have been required to provide his corporate financial data at a hearing to set punitive damages.

Despite his vivid history of drug, alcohol, physical assault and verbal abuse, Ricci made another bid for governor of Maine in the spring of 1998. He continued to claim he was a champion of workers and citizen’s civil rights.

That same year one of Elan’s former residents, Ethel Kennedy’s nephew Michael Skakel was investigated for the brutal 1975 murder of Martha Moxley in Greenwich Connecticut. The Skakels lived near the Moxley family in Greenwich. Skakel’s father, Rushton is the brother of Ethel Kennedy, U.S. Senator Robert Kennedy’s widow. Skakel’s parents enrolled him at Elan to treat an alcohol problem following Moxley’s death when he was arrested for drunk driving.

Allegations surfaced from two former residents that Skakel confessed to killing Moxley while he attended Elan from 1978 to 1980, and that Joe Ricci knew about it. A judge ordered Ricci to comply with a subpoena and appear before a Connecticut grand jury. Ricci vowed to resist the subpoena, but he eventually

testified.

In September of 1998 Ricci arrived at the Fairfield County courthouse in Connecticut, emerging from a white stretch limousine in a mocking mood. Dressed in solid black, except for his tie emblazoned with an image of a panther, he bragged to reporters he'd used the \$600 transportation allotment from the state prosecutor to pay for the stretch limo. He testified behind closed doors to the grand jury, while taking frequent cigarette breaks, where he'd speak with reporters on the courthouse steps, promising all of them Maine lobsters.

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In the late 1990s the Internet began to connect people as never before through e-mail and burgeoning social media. Adults from throughout the United States, who had been sent to Elan, began sharing their stories. No longer juveniles, these grown men, and women, many still struggling with the abuse they faced as tortured teenagers, set up blogs and websites as we entered the 21st century.

We received requests for copies of this book, which had long sold out in the state of Maine. Former residents wanted to share the book with parents, a spouse, or a sibling to demonstrate their abuse was real and they were not alone.

In 1998 my husband Dan and I moved from Maine to the tiny island of St. John in the Virgin Islands. I picked up the phone one day in 1998.

"Hello Maura. It's Joe." We hadn't spoken in nearly eight years, since this book's publication. I froze, wondering how Joe Ricci had gotten my phone number. "It's good to hear your voice," he said. "You know I have no animosity towards you." "Why, all things considered, are you calling me?" I asked

"I think the last time we had a huge misunderstanding, I got crazy, but that's all past. I'm thinking of running for governor again, and don't believe anyone can duplicate the work you did." He said, "Things are going great at Elan. Golden Ark Enterprises is netting \$2.2 Million a year. I'm about to sign an agreement with Power-house Technologies, which could mean \$3 to \$4 million more at Scarborough Downs. I'm much better positioned in this state than when my Key Bank case, and other matters distracted me. I even have Dave Redmond on my side."

I was incredulous that Redmond, a former educator, who worked for three Maine governors, was in Joe Ricci's pocket. Former Governor Curtis appointed Redmond in 1972 to the Maine Board of Education. Former Governor Longley appointed Redmond to the Parole Board and State Board of Executive Clemency in 1975. Eventually Redmond served as chief of staff for former Governor Joe Brennan after he became, the congressman in the U.S. House of Representatives.

"I have my ways," Ricci said, adding that Bill Diamond, former secretary of state, and one of his opponents in the 1986 Democratic primary, was helping Elan out.

Then he embarked on a monologue about how he wanted to launch a high-tech campaign for governor. He talked about how he would challenge independent Governor Angus King. He said his platform would include legalizing casino gambling, which would help him and the state of Maine. He said he was against tax for liquor and tobacco products.

"I'm a smoker, but not because I want to be, but because I'm an addict. An addict tax doesn't make sense," he said. "What's next, making food more expensive for obese people?"

He complained about the Skakel prosecution's persistence in involving Elan, declaring: "I'm simply not going to give them what they want."

Finally, he took a breath "When are you coming back to Maine?" he asked. "Are you interested in getting on board with my campaign?"  
I declined. He mumbled something and hung up abruptly.

I didn't hear from Joe Ricci until about two years later when he called again. "Dan is writing bad things about Elan," he began. "I need to know your role in all of this."

At the time I was heavily involved in my work for a media group in St. Thomas and hadn't been following Joe Ricci or Elan. I also wasn't aware that my husband had sent a copy of this book to the judge presiding over the Skakel trial and it was being considered as admissible evidence.

I told Ricci I knew little about any Elan related activity and whatever Dan wrote or did was his business. I told him I was not involved. "Good," he answered.

“Then... I will do what I must do. I just wanted to know if it had to include you. If Dan wants to call me directly tell him he can,” he said before hanging up.

Two days later my husband and I were having lunch in St. John’s Cruz Bay, when we realized that the man across the table, with clothes that looked out of place for the tropics, had taken a photo of us. We left and he followed. We were worried that he could have been sent by Ricci and cause us harm. That night Dan called Ricci at home.

He wanted Dan to back off, stop stirring up controversy.

“Let the Elan people fight among themselves,” he cautioned. Then he repeated a warning he had given me years earlier. “Don’t stand in my line of fire.”

Neither Dan nor I ever spoke with Joe Ricci again. He died January 29, 2001, two days after being admitted to Maine Medical Center for complications from the chemotherapy treating his lung cancer.

But Ricci’s death did not end the state prosecutor’s desire to involve Elan in its case against Michael Skakel. A year and a half later Skakel were tried for murder and ex-Elan residents testified. Former residents indicated Ricci told them that Skakel may have killed a Greenwich, Conn. girl in 1975. Witness for the prosecution said Skakel confessed during an Elan encounter group, while witness for the defense maintained that the atmosphere at Elan was so horrific residents could be coerced into saying anything.

Former Elan staff member Alice Dunn said after Skakel tried to run away. “Ricci indicated that Skakel was involved in the murder of Martha Moxley...” She recalled, “Skakel denied it, which made Ricci lose his temper.” This prompted other Elan residents to rush Skakel and scream obscenities in his face.

Dunn observed that Skakel was put into Elan’s infamous boxing ring. After a round he was asked to admit to the murder, and if he continued to deny his act, he would be put back in for another round. She said he lasted for six or eight rounds before he finally changed his answer to “I don’t know.”

Dunn testified that cardboard signs were hung around a resident’s neck. Skakel’s sign read: “Confront me on why I killed Martha Moxley.” Dorothy Rogers of Asheville, N.C., recalled a group therapy session in which Skakel was confronted.

She said, “One student stood up and asked: ‘How does it feel to beat a girl to death with a golf club?’”

In his opening arguments on May 7, 2002, Skakel’s defense attorney, Michael Sherman, told the jury the Elan School was “like a mix of the Hanoi Hilton and Stalag 17.”

Horrific practices at Elan have been condemned since 1975 by various reports from states other than Maine, through personal testimony in this book and in social media. Yet Michael Skakel’s trial in 2002 brought a national focus on Elan’s bizarre and arguably illegal practices.

The national media started asking questions.

Sharon Terry who had married Joe Ricci less than a year before he died, recruited long time Ricci lawyer John Campbell to help quell the media storm. Campbell distributed a statement defending the school:

*“Over the past thirty years, the Elan School has helped thousands of students. Hundreds of social workers, special-education personnel, psychologists, psychiatrists, counselors, and therapists have reviewed the Elan program and its successes and have continued to send students to Elan. A review team appointed by Maine Gov. James Longley in 1975 - before Skakel attended the school - said Elan students ‘usually expressed newly found feelings of dignity, self-assurance and mental well-being, and they attributed these feelings to the treatment they were receiving.”*

No mention was made about the opposing conclusions by other investigations of Elan, including those by official from the states of Illinois, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island.

In response to Elan’s negative national publicity surrounding the Skakel trial, and an abuse claim the same year by Canadian authorities, Maine’s Department of Education made a public announcement it would investigate.

“I think we mutually agreed it would be a good idea, given the media accounts and issues swirling around,” spokesperson for the department said. “We’ll go in with completely open minds.”

Long time Ricci Lawyer Ed MacColl, said Elan was “looking forward to a visit.” Elan administration had plenty of time to prepare.

Maine’s Commissioner of Education, J. Duke Albanese, dispatched a “school approval team” to Elan on June 19 and July 8, 2002. The three members team included Edwin N. Kastuck, Ph.D., team chairman, learning systems team, Rose Mary Muir, Esq., certification legal consultant and David N. Stockford, director, division of special services

On September 3, 2002, the team’s submitted its findings with a disclaimer in capital letters:

*THIS REPORT CONTAINS INFORMATION PERTAINING TO A BASIC SCHOOL APPROVAL REVIEW CONDUCTED AT THE ELAN SCHOOL. IT DOES NOT CONTAIN CONFIDENTIAL INVESTIGATIVE INFORMATION PERTAINING TO SPECIFIC ALLEGATIONS MADE BY FORMER ELAN STUDENTS.*

Investigators indicated they found “*no indication that students enrolled in the Elan School are placed at risk for their safety or well-being.*”

The team presented Elan in the best possible light, even providing a list of commendations, which included praising the Elan staff for being “*cordial, cooperative and forthcoming*” and for “*documentation and record keeping regarding student needs*” and “*for creating increased opportunities for student interaction with their families.*”

Five years after Maine’s complimentary findings, the New York State Department of Education initiated an investigation, after reading an opinion piece in the *The New York Times* by Maia Szalavitz, a journalist who covers health, science, and public policy.

Szalavitz wrote about how New York had been sending children with learning disabilities to Elan, as an emergency placement for those with autism and mental health issues.

New York authorities warned it would stop sending students to Elan unless it began using qualified counselors to run therapy groups, prevent students from

disciplining each other and making them stay up throughout the night to guard each other. It also wanted Elan to cease its prolonged isolation as punishment and the practice of students restraining each other.

In an article posted January 17, 2007, on the *Huffington Post*, Szalavitz wrote about New York's ultimatum to Elan.

*"Let's hope this is the beginning of the end for this senseless relic. We now know what works to help kids with addictions, with learning disabilities, with psychiatric problems and behavior issues. It's not abuse, but empathy and respect."*

But it took over five more years and a determined group of former residents, intent on networking and sharing stories to stop the "senseless relic."

In March of 2011, Sharon Terry announced that Elan would close April 1. Terry sent a letter to the press blaming negative comments on the Internet for the recent decline in Elan's enrollment.

Elan's attorney Ed MacColl, issued a statement observing:

*"It's unfortunate that the hardworking, talented and creative people associated with the school aren't getting simply the uniform praise they deserve for a lifetime of working with kids."*

But Elan's closing prompted an outpouring of emotion across several sites and Facebook pages, devoted to Elan. Here are just a few posted by former residents and their families after Terry's announcement:

Name: Matt Hoffman on Mar 26, 2011

*Elan was not closed by harsh Internet attacks it was closed by the light that was shined on it, by the truth that was posted on the Internet. Elan was a sadistic, brutal, violent soul-eating hellhole, and thank God no more children will be hurt by this place ever.*

Name: Jordan Eisman on Mar 26, 2011

*"Tyranny in the name of therapy" It's nice to see it end.*

Name: Katey on Mar 26, 2011

*Thank God that place is closing. It is/was a cult! I would NEVER send a child there!*

Name: Sharon McCarthy on Mar 26, 2011

*They may be closing but they left many many scars.*

Name: Marina Costin Fuser on Mar 26, 2011

*I question the efficacy of a program based on archaic methods such as public humiliation, punishment, inducement of fear and the neutralization of powers, the breaking of the personal self-image and the paternal behavior. A therapy session should only be run by a psychologist or psychoanalyst who's fully prepared to help these adolescents to come to a better understanding of themselves which was not the case .... Therapeutically it's been proven to be a disaster and its effects can produce not short, but long-term traumas, as it we can read on the testimony of many of those who happen to have gone through this program. I was diagnosed with post-traumatic depression after graduating the program, and it took me years to overcome its symptoms...*

Name: Sean Garbelman on Mar 26, 2011

*Elan should have been closed exactly 41 years ago.*

Name: Leela on Mar 26, 2011

*Elan was not therapy. It was humiliation and at times as close to torture as I understand the definition to be. I have lost many friends to drugs, alcohol, and disease that they would not have been exposed to if not for Elan's "therapy" in my opinion. When my parents decided to definitively pull me out, they told me I would never succeed and would fail at life, when weeks before I had been the "strongest female" in the house. I have a wonderful loving husband and together we have a beautiful son. I couldn't have asked for more in all my dreams. But not a week goes by that I do not have a nightmare at least once a week that is in some way related to Elan.*

Name: Lauren Epstein on Mar 26, 2011

*I was not prepared at all for adult hood. I blame my lack of a relationship with my parents on Elan. No child should be taken, handcuffed in the middle of the night, thrown in the back of a van or on a plane and not able to see its parents but MAYBE once a year. School was a joke... no reason for anyone not to get an A even the completely unmotivated student can pass classes with no tests and*

*homework twice a week.*

Name: John Stark on Mar 26, 2011

*My wife went there and I'm glad no others will have to deal with what she did*

Name: Dj Cianfrone on Mar 26, 2011

*The next step is to hold the upper staff accountable for the way students were treated.*

Name: Frances Coleman on Mar 26, 2011

*LET THE HEALING BEGIN...IT IS FINALLY OVER!*

Name: Miluska T. Martínez Sarson on Mar 26, 2011

*I completely support the efforts to close the Elan School. No more abuse  
humiliation, untrained staff, arbitrary tactics, unwanted sexual innuendo from  
staff to students, damaging practices not based on research, poor schooling (or,  
actually, NO schooling, as the courses were self-taught, with the student being  
provided a book and a school desk to do work if she/he wanted to do it). How it  
stayed open for 41 years is a mystery to me...*

Name: Jillian Culver-Rebeck on Mar 26, 2011

*I attended Elan during the years 1993-1996. it was one of the worst and most  
horrifying experiences in my life! I'm glad that finally this place of hell will be  
shut down. Furthermore, no more children will have to be tortured, abused, or  
neglected!*

Name: Carey T on Mar 26, 2011

*I sent my daughter there thinking it was something totally different. She was  
diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder after coming home and had so  
many problems after "graduating." The guilt I have is at times unbearable, but I  
truly did think that it was a therapeutic, loving, and warm environment where  
she would emotionally and academically flourish. I'm sorry for the things that  
she and all of you had to endure. I wish there was an Internet back then.*

Name: Whit Long on Mar 26, 2011

*To the end of a cruel and unusual era of abuse. I raise my glass to the closing of  
Elan. May god have mercy on your souls.*

Name: Mary Wicklander on Mar 26, 2011

*NONE of what former residents are saying is false! NONE OF IT!*

Name: Matt Bean on Mar 27, 2011

*Thank God this place is done for. I was there from 20'06 to 20'08... I'm shocked it took so long for that corrupt place to get shut down. Oh well, thank god nobody else can be harmed by their evil.*

Name: Pearl on Mar 27, 2011

*Shame on Maine for allowing the abuse to go on for 41 years.*

Name: Talor Moran on Mar 27, 2011

*Time to put this evil to sleep.*

Name: T. Brown on Mar 27, 2011

*I'm truly sorry all the individuals and their families who suffered at ELAN had to go through what they have gone through. Those in crisis need real support from qualified professionals. We have the same problem in Calgary, Alberta. We are trying to shed light on the Alberta Adolescent Recovery Centre, or AARC. Our family was involved in this program almost 4 years ago. It is a descendent of Straight Inc., via Kids of Bergen County, where the AARC Director Dean Vause worked in the late 80's. May Elan's closure pave the way for other destructive, unregulated and/or abusive programs!*

Name: Jake on Mar 27, 2011

*Thanks GOD they're closing that disaster. What a kid mill-but they all probably got rich as hell off of being sadistically cruel.*

Name: Lindsey Pasch on Mar 29, 2011

*I attended Elan and feel that they should be held responsible for their actions. They have scarred many and caused several others harm. The closing of Elan is the best thing that could have happened.*

Name: Ryan G. on Mar 31, 2011

*Elan was a nightmare for me and many other kids. I wish they'd have shut it down way sooner.*

Name: Mrs. Perez on Mar 31, 2011

*I'm sorry for sending my son to that school- He has so many things to go wrong after that and he has been so much worse with problems. They didn't help at all. They just called him names ... But they don't help him with any of his problems. He has fight people and I teach him not to fight. They teach him to fight.*

Name: Rachel Batmanghelidj Searle on Mar 31, 2011

*Elan did more harm than good. No child will ever have to face the humiliation, neglect, and abuse delivered at the hands of the Elan School. Let us rejoice.*

Name: Renee Feld on Mar 31, 2011

*I was at Elan early 1970s I remember being put in trash shed and stayed for days with maggots crawling all over me. It was summer I got sick and didn't make it to bathroom. I had to eat my vomit.*

Name: Dotorg/crimes against humanity. Elan on Apr 1, 2011

*We all have the same nightmares. Don't rest until every Elan staff member is prosecuted.*

Name: Charlie Cheshire on Apr 1, 2011

*I was there in 86-87. The place was a nuthouse. Good riddance*

Name: Ellen Pullman on Apr 2, 2011

*I'm the mother of an ex-Elan student.... According to him, he did well, but not because of that place. He says the rough patches and the nightmares he suffers from are what he got from his time there. He's my son, so I know him, and I agree. Thank you for ridding the world of Elan. It needed to be done.*

Name: Jerry Torre on Apr 2, 2011

*Elan was a cruel joke that caused me to laugh bitterly for the past 23 years. I'm glad it's gone.*

Name: Kelly Clapp on May 9, 2011

*Elan treated children with mental illness and none of the staff were qualified to do that. In most cases the staff had no high school diploma, let alone a college degree. They belong in jail and a lawsuit against the Maine Department of Education is overdue*

Without social media the legions of formerly abused adolescents and teens

would not have been able to join forces, find solidarity and empower each other to speak out.

Felice Eliscu then forty-six, spent eight months at Elan in 1981.

Chicago's Dr. Marvin Schwartz referred her, even after Illinois had long stopped sending its wards of the state to Elan because of abusive practices. Schwartz told Eliscu's father, a wealthy industrialist, that Elan would help his daughter adjust from her parents' divorce.

Eliscu says she didn't conform to Ricci's mandates and was kicked out with one day notice, unable to even say goodbye to her peers. Decades later she made it her mission to warn others about the abuse, working tirelessly on the Internet, dedicating two hours a day to her mission "It was every day, like exercise," she declared. Only after it closed, she felt she could "finally exhale."

Matt Hoffman, a fifty-three-year-old small business owner, was one of the first former residents to document abuse at Elan via the Internet. He moderated forums and helped counsel former residents. He chose not to shield his identity with a moniker because he wanted to be counted as a real person, with a verifiable experience.

Hoffman's abusive father, a gynecologist, sent him to Elan thirty-seven years ago, before he turned sixteen, because he dared to challenge his father's terrorizing tactics. He stayed for two years. Despite the passage of time, Elan is forever on Hoffman's mind, its bizarre imagery still vivid, in reoccurring flashbacks. Hoffman said it was a good day when he learned that Elan was closing but believes "just voluntarily shutting its doors isn't enough." He feels the people who perpetrated and seemed to feed on the abuse should finally be held accountable. He wonders why the testimony of a few former Elan residents contributed to the murder conviction of Michael Skakel, when the testimony of hundreds of former residents and numerous investigators over decades, continues to be ignored. "It was child abuse, he stated, "and it should be prosecuted."

Joe Ricci made sure that Elan had friends in high places. He had Sharon Terry recruit Maine's former secretary of state and state senator Bill Diamond to act as "director of governmental relations for the Elan

corporation,” from 1997 until Elan closed its doors in 2011. Diamond, who once taught elementary school and later became a high school principal in Maine, was also listed on Elan’s promotional materials as being “superintendent of Elan school.” Yet, according to Diamond, he “never had an office or Elan” and was “never on the campus.”

Speaking with me by phone in December of 2012, shortly after completing his tenure in the Maine legislature, Diamond characterized his decade and a half working for Elan as being a liaison with the Department of Education regarding licensing. He characterized his role as Elan’s “superintendent of Elan schools” as primarily a title. He said, “They needed a superintendent, and I was certified as a superintendent.”

Diamond said he dealt with Sharon Terry and Elan’s lawyer Robert MacColl via the phone. He said they’d ask for his help with the Department of Education, and he would “put them in touch with the right officials so they could talk with them.”

Diamond chaired Maine’s Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee from 2004 to 2008, which oversees the state correctional system, including Maine prisons. During his time in the legislature, he sponsored and cosponsored legislation regarding child sexual abuse.

In April of 2012 Diamond self-published a book: *“The Evil and the Innocent,”* a graphic account of sordid case histories of child sexual abuse in Maine. In the introduction Diamond writes that his book is *“about courage and determination, how kids learned to survive, even under the most terrible of conditions.”* He wrote: *“Facts need to be known, so there will be outrage. If not, nothing will change.”*

I told the former legislator, that the same observations could be written about the residents of Elan and the school’s abusive practices. I asked if he had any misgivings about promoting Elan, given its controversy and extensive allegations of child abuse.

Diamond said he believed Elan’s problems were in the past before he became involved in 1997. He cited how Maine’s Department of Education produced some favorable reports about Elan, not elaborating how much influence he

wielded in the outcome of those reports.

I mentioned that evaluations from other states, specifically New York's 2007 report, contradicted Maine's 2002 assessment of Elan, which was issued when he was working for Elan.

Diamond told me he heard from Sharon Terry and attorney Ed MacColl that "there was another whole side other than what was reported" concerning New York's allegations. He recalled that Ed MacColl talked with the Elan staff and seemed comfortable because Elan was meeting the guidelines from the state Department of Education. When I noted that New York's Department of Education did not agree it was meeting its guidelines, Diamond again commented that he was "not on site, had no knowledge of Elan's daily operations."

When I asked Diamond what he thought after reading negative comments by former Elan residents on the Internet, he said, "I haven't read any of them. Ed MacColl told me about them, Sharon as well, but they indicated it was "problems primarily in the past." Diamond attributed Elan's notoriety to a former treatment model, "dealing with drug addicted residents from a large urban population."

Elan continued the same course after Ricci's death, keeping its original model of peer pressure and humiliation. Ricci's hand-picked successors, specifically Sharon Terry, Marty Kruglik and Jeffrey Gottlieb, who had worked at Elan since the 1970s, continued running the daily operations until Elan finally closed on April 2011.

Until the end, Elan remained unapologetic. Sharon Terry made it a point, when announcing Elan's closing, that it had been granted a license by Maine's Department of Education through 2014.

## A Few Final Words

Despite Joe Ricci's conviction for sexual harassment, assaults, defamation, public drunkenness, drug use, and numerous documented allegations of child abuse, the Maine State Legislature chose to praise him after his death. To portray Joe Ricci as respectable, Ricci's long time lawyer John Campbell distributed a press release at Michael Skakel's trial, which read in part:

*"Fifty-one senators and representatives adopted a special resolution in honor of Mr. Ricci recognizing his energy, dedication and service to his community and the state and his many achievements, including cofounding the Elan adolescent treatment center."*

Bill Diamond, former Maine state senator and Elan's former director for governmental relations, didn't recall sponsoring the posthumous Ricci resolution, but conceded: "I could have, perhaps I did."

Why do we mythologize powerful people, no matter how flawed?

History is littered with examples about how we turn a blind eye to appropriated virtue and provide cover for criminal behavior. We get star struck by big charitable donations, a high paying job or client, until we're broadsided.

Society is filled with psychopaths, who often cause more harm than clear cut killers. These include successful businesspeople, priests, doctors accomplished academics- and some may argue at least one president of the United States.

According to *Mask of Sanity*, psychopaths are ruthless, manipulative and create havoc and destruction in their wake. They often act without shame, guilt, or remorse. They tell you what you want to hear, when it serves their means, then blow up the world around you.

During his thirty years as a businessman in Maine Joe Ricci bullied people into doing his bidding. Elan was the base camp for Ricci's reign of terror, which extended to his employees at Scarborough Downs, Maine government, and personal and professional relationships.

Ricci's lawyers, acting as hired guns, suspended reason, and distorted the pursuit

of justice to carry out Joe Ricci's law. They grew rich doing it, while damaging their own credibility and hurting genuine victims. They banked on Joe Ricci's uncanny ability to manipulate everyone, even the media.

This book has not been written to judge Joe Ricci, or even condemn him for his actions. It was written to help illuminate the darkness he delivered to many lives and empower readers to recognize this behavior and refuse to tolerate it.

In the case of Elan, troubled adolescents were not protected from harm. Why did the state of Maine allow Elan to operate for nearly forty-one years?

Was it due to private payoffs, fear, apathy, or ignorance?

Could Ricci have bought off public officials as he had so many others? Or were Maine authorities so intimidated by Ricci's penchant for lawsuits, that they just left him alone to abuse adolescents on his private acreage in the woods?

Apathy and ignorance are inexcusable when it comes to regulating the welfare of minors.

Although Elan finally closed voluntarily, it's not too late to hold the state of Maine accountable and see justice served. Too many lives were ruined or ended prematurely.

In the final year of Elan's operation tuition was \$54,000 per student. Conservative math puts Elan's forty years of profits in the many millions.

Residential treatment for troubled teens brings in big money. There are still treatment centers using abusive tactics towards young people who require professional therapy and mental health care. It is up to us to assure teenagers are not abused, even when governing authorities opt to do nothing.

Related links: <https://elan.school/80-the-end/>

<https://thelaststopfilm.com/>